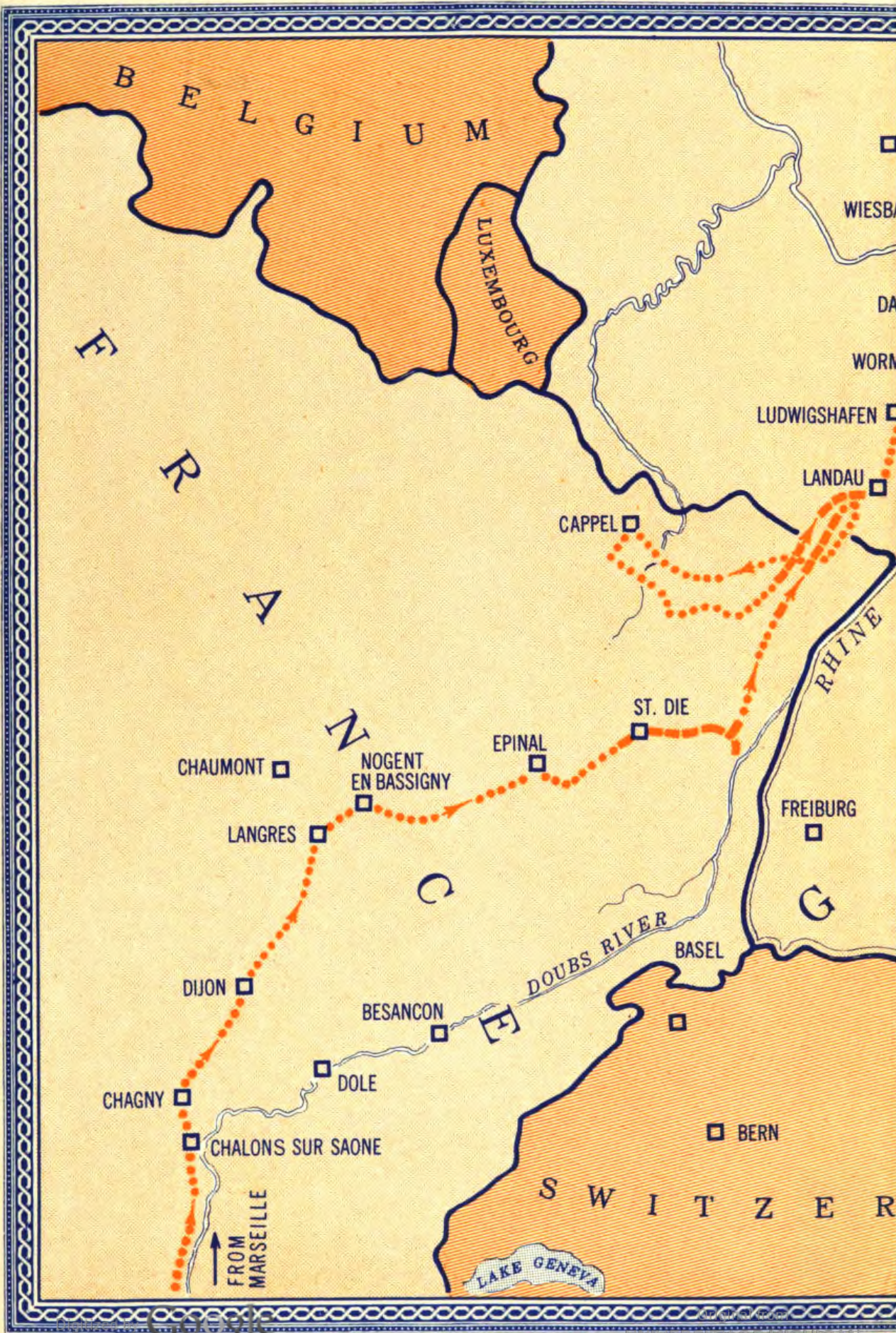
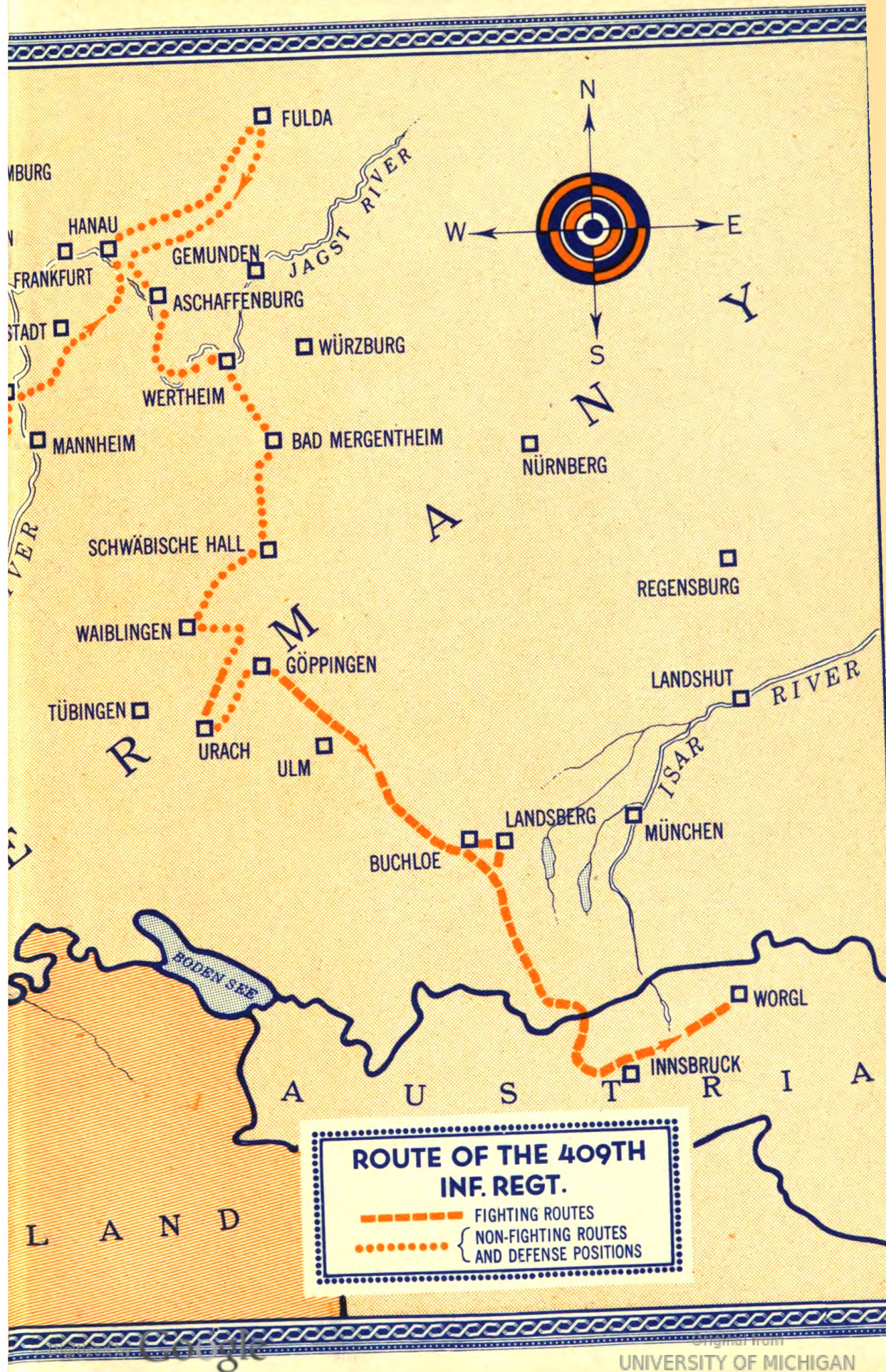


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THE 409TH INFANTRY
IN WORLD WAR II

The 409th Infantry

In World War II



By

SERGEANT WILLIAM EAST, *Company B*

AND

PRIVATE WILLIAM F. GLEASON, *Company K*



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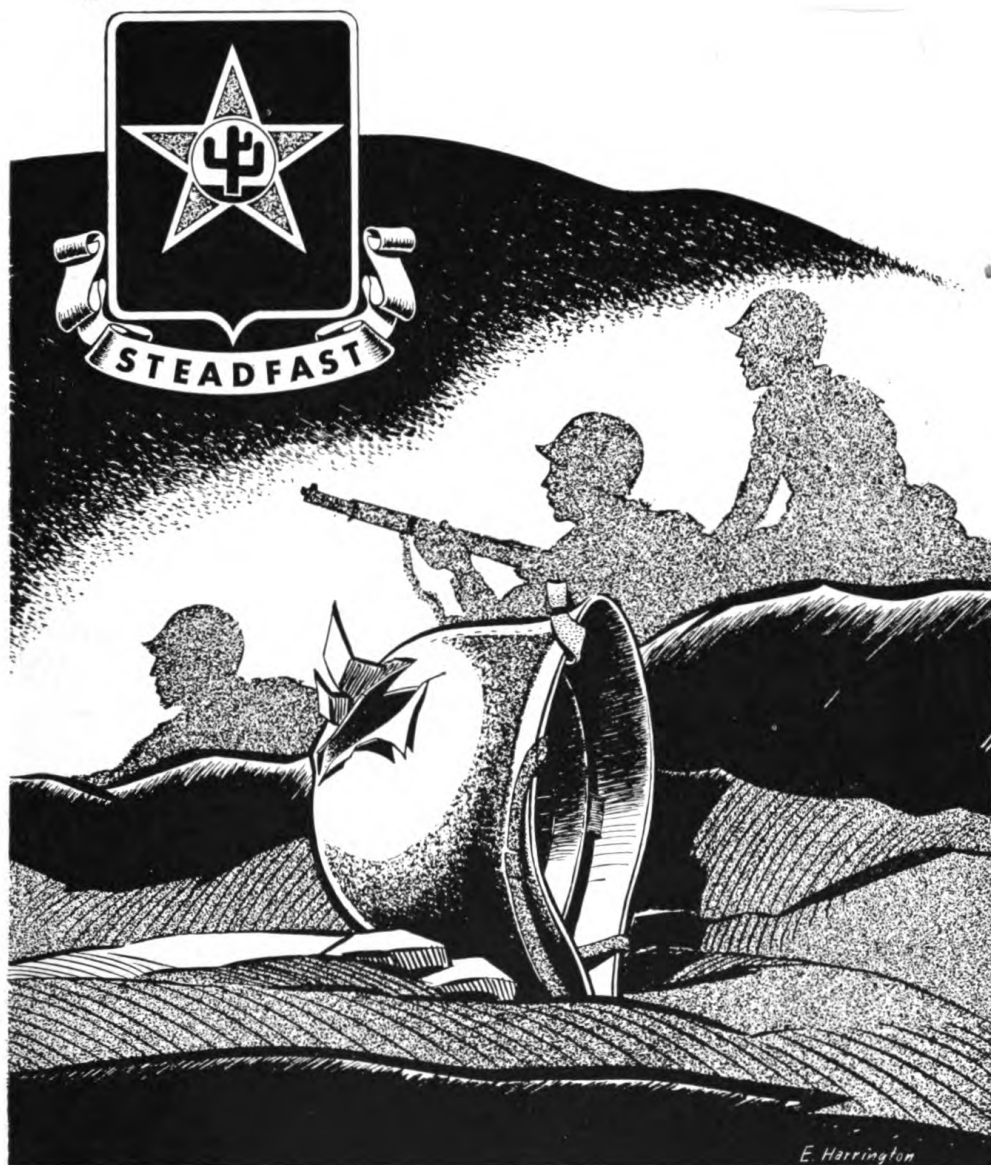
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THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO THE 253 MEN OF THE 409TH INFANTRY REGIMENT WHO DIED IN ACTION IN THE EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS SO THAT WE TODAY MIGHT ENJOY FREEDOM AND THE FULLNESS OF LIFE.

THEIR SACRIFICE HAS NOT BEEN IN VAIN, SO AS THE MEN OF THE CACTUS DIVISION AGAIN TAKE THEIR PLACES IN CIVILIAN LIFE, THEY ARE MORE FIRMLY RESOLVED THAN EVER THAT SUCH SACRIFICE SHALL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN.



RHINELAND

15 September 1944 to 21 March 1945



CENTRAL EUROPE

22 March to 11 May 1945

HEADQUARTERS 409TH COMBAT TEAM
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER

Subject: Appreciation

To :

1. It is my earnest desire to personally thank you for the undaunted courage and absolute devotion to duty that you so willingly gave during the trying months which our Combat Team spent in the war in Europe. We know now that our struggles were not in vain—that the once vaunted and formidable German Army, which you met on the battlefield and successfully defeated, no longer exists. Victory in war is ours.

2. I cannot, in words, properly express my feelings at this moment. Your unreserved decision to accept unknown hardships of training and combat, and your sacrifice of home and family life during this perilous period, only magnified your willingness to freely give your life, if need be, so that what we each hold dear shall not be lost to us.

3. Our fortunes in war—the fortunes of each of us—must necessarily be guided by those whom we loyally serve. Our Division Commander, Major General Charles C. Haffner, Jr., has recently expressed to me in no uncertain terms his sincere respect and profound admiration for the part each man unselfishly undertook in the inspiring combat successes of the 409th Combat Team. Major General Anthony C. McAuliffe, our Division Commander during the latter culminating phases of the war, has held our Combat Team in only the highest esteem and most capable of any assignment regardless of magnitude. As well may follow, Major General Edward H. Brooks, Commanding General, VI Corps, and the late Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch, Commanding General, Seventh Army, have, both individually and specifically, expressed their wholehearted respect for the outstanding combat aggressiveness of the 409th Combat Team in the one hundred per cent attainment of vital assignments.

4. I say to you, as a member of the 409th Combat Team—a task magnificently performed. You have set a standard in infantry combat not to be easily approached by those who may be called upon to follow you in years to come. My sincere thanks—and the thanks of each of your fellow countrymen.


Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

FOREWORD

This volume contains operations of the 409th Infantry Regiment, 103d Infantry Division, from its activation in the winter of late 1942 until VE-day (Victory in Europe), May 8, 1945, after which the Division was classified Category IV and returned to the United States for inactivation.

Combat operations included cover the period from the landing at Marseille, France, on October 20, 1944, until completion of operations in the vicinity of Innsbruck, Austria, on May 5, 1945.

VE-day and the Proclamation of Victory by President Harry S. Truman at 1500 hours (Double British Summer Time) on May 8, 1945 found the Regimental CP located at Vomp, Austria, 28 kilometers east of Innsbruck, capital of Austrian Tyrol.

The last chapter is a résumé of the movements of the 409th Infantry from VE-day to inactivation.

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THE CACTUS IS BORN
December 1942 to September 1944

THE CACTUS IS BORN

The Cactus Division—the 103d Infantry Division—and its 409th Infantry Regiment, were born in 1942, at a time when the United States was battling against time to prepare for its two-front war against Japan and Germany.

December 1942 was the month of organization for the newly activated Division. The bulk of filler replacements reported from reception centers, to bring the Division to full strength. Further schooling of the cadre; reception, classification and assignment of more than 13,000 new men; and complete occupation of the Division's area at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, were accomplished.

The Division began its basic training January 4, 1943, under the Mobilization Training Program. Basic training was conducted for thirteen weeks until April 3.

Unit training was held from April 10 to June 26. On April 19, construction of the mock village (Combat in Villages Course), infiltration course and close combat course was completed and the courses placed in operation to train troops of the Division. The Army Ground Forces Physical Fitness Test was given to the personnel of the Division June 7 to 12.

Combined training of units was conducted June 27 to September 4.

On August 8, 1943, the Division was reorganized under Tables of Organization 7, dated July 15, 1943. The 103d Division Artillery Band and the 411th Infantry Band were disbanded and in their place the 103d Infantry Division band was activated.

Other organizations activated were Headquarters Special Troops, 103d Infantry Division, under Tables of Organization 7-3 dated July 15, 1943; Medical Detachment; Headquarters Special Troops; and Cannon Companies for the three infantry regiments.

During the phase of combined training, the Division moved by motor march on August 8-9 to an area west of Camp Claiborne near Slagle, Simpson and Hineston, Louisiana, for D series maneuvers. The first three problems were controlled. In these the Division moved against one of its infantry battalions. The last three problems were free maneuvers in which two combat teams of the Division moved against the third combat team. The Division returned to Camp Claiborne on September 2, 3 and 4 and prepared to participate in Third Army maneuvers.

Movement to the Third Army maneuver area by motor march was begun on the morning of September 15 and the Division closed in bivouac in the vicinity of Hawthorne, Louisiana, late in the afternoon of September 17.

Following the flag exercises, a series of six two-sided maneuvers was held.



Col. Claudius L. Lloyd, commander of the 409th Infantry Regiment from February 1944 until its inactivation. Colonel Lloyd had been Regimental Executive Officer from activation on November 15, 1942, until he assumed command of the Regiment.



Maj. Gen. Charles C. Haffner, Jr., first commander of the 103d Infantry Division. General Haffner trained the Division and brought it through combat until January 8, 1945, when illness caused his evacuation and retirement from the Division.



Lt. Col. Hubert E. Strange, Regimental Executive Officer throughout combat and for a short time in the United States prior to combat.

In Phase 2, the 103d Division initially remained concealed while the 102d Division opposed the VIII Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. Daniel I. Sultan and composed of the 84th and 99th Infantry Divisions. Maj. Gen. John B. Anderson then took command of the Provisional XXI Corps, and the 103d, moving to the flank of the 102d Infantry Division, participated in a Corps attack.

In Phase 3, the 84th defended against the VIII Corps, commandel by General Sultan and composed of the other three Divisions, all infantry.

The 103d and 102d attacked abreast, the 103d on the left (south), and the 99th, marching by night, enveloped from the north.

In Phase 4, the VIII Corps, commanded by General Sultan and composed of the 102d and 103d Divisions, attacked the Provisional XXI Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. Charles C. Haffner, Jr. The XXI Corps conducted a delaying action for two days, the 99th Division opposing the 102d and 103d Divisions. It then counterattacked with two divisions, the 84th Division (which had been attached later) and the 99th Division.

In Phase 5, the 103d defended against the other three divisions which comprised the VIII Corps under the command of General Sultan.

In Phase 6, the 99th defended the river line against the XIX Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. Willis D. Crittenger, which had replaced the VIII Corps Headquarters. In this operation, the 84th and 99th Divisions attacked the bridgehead with the 103d Infantry Division enveloping on the right, making two night marches. This was followed by a river crossing as a continuation of the attack on the bridgehead.

Phase 7 was a repetition of Phase 5, with the 102d defending. The 103d was the interior division of the attacking force, composed of the XIX Corps (84th, 99th and 103d Infantry Divisions).

Upon the close of Army maneuvers November 15, the Division moved into non-tactical bivouac near Merryville, Louisiana, and three days later began, by rail and motor march, its permanent change of station to Camp Howze, Texas. The Division closed in Camp Howze at 0501 November 23.

The first phase of post-maneuver training began November 29.

During 1943 the Division was visited by the Third Army and Army Ground Forces commanders. On May 6, Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges, Commanding General Third Army, inspected the Division in training at Camp Claiborne. The late Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair, Commanding General Army Ground Forces, arrived at the Army Air Base at DeRidder, Louisiana, October 18 to visit the maneuver area and the 103d Infantry Division was among the units he inspected.

OVER THE BOUNDING WAVES

October 5 to November 1, 1944

OVER THE BOUNDING WAVES

This was not a dry run. With preliminaries finished, the 409th Infantry Regiment moved quickly and quietly out of Camp Shanks, New York. Troop movements in and out of camp were routine to Transportation Corps personnel. No time was lost. No practice alerts were necessary.

Troops marched to the camp railroad yard where trains were waiting. The bulky duffel bags had been loaded earlier. Each man moved to his assigned seat in a day coach and found his bag by his seat. Not more than an hour after boarding the train troops were being ferried across the Hudson River to the great wharves that sheltered the troop transports. Soldiers kicked, dragged and wrestled duffel bags from the ferry dock to the ship site.

Again there was very little time lost. As the Cactusmen went through the gates a Second Service Command band played nostalgic songs—songs that the same band had undoubtedly played over and over again since the first troops of the Second AEF had embarked from New York early in 1942.

Once inside the inclosed wharf the troops dropped packs, bags and gas masks. There was a hint of autumn in the air; it was October 5, 1944. After they had rested for two or three minutes the perspiring soldiers began to feel chilly. It was then that the pleasant Red Cross women arrived with pitchers of hot coffee and doughnuts. Each man was also presented with a kit containing toilet articles and leisure-time games.

Before long the men began to file into position to get aboard. As a man approached the gangplank he would hear his surname called by an officer. The soldier would respond with his first name and Army serial number.

Boarding of ship and assignment of units to their sections was accomplished with little confusion. An effort was made to keep platoons together so they could be easily controlled by platoon commanders. The men had their first look at the folding canvas bunks that were to be bed and “home” for the duration of the journey.

The ship rode at anchor until the following morning. Then wheezing little tugs began to nudge and pull the giant liner into position. In a short time the pilot boat led the way out into the roads. With a salute the pilot relinquished command to the ship’s captain and the 409th Infantry Regiment was on its way.

In time it was learned that the ship, the converted luxury liner, *Conte Grandi*, was now the *USS Monticello*, a Navy transport. Men also shortly learned that whatever luxuries the liner had boasted were obviously things of the past. Conditions aboard the vessel were far from enjoyable. The lack of space and the erratic operation of the ventilation system made life unpleasant, particularly in the enlisted men’s section. There was also the expected siege of seasickness. *Mal de mer* as subject matter for comic



Col. Charles N. Stevens, first commander of the 409th Infantry. Illness caused his retirement from the Regiment early in 1944.

strip creators and movie producers will draw few laughs in this postwar world from service people who know how wretched this illness can be.

On regular schedules the troops were taken on deck where they could store up a supply of fresh air to tide them over the period to be spent in the stuffy compartments. Inspections, always a bane of the enlisted men,

were especially irksome aboard ship, but the unpleasant conditions that made inspections annoying also made them especially necessary.

Life above decks was as good as life below decks was bad. There were fresh air, sunshine and pleasant salt spray breezes in abundance. Most men would have stayed on top deck throughout the day if they had been permitted to do so, but the great number of men aboard prohibited this pleasure. Each compartment was allotted a certain number of hours per day. Even with time rationed as it was each man usually managed to get out of the hold at least twice daily.

Features of the deck sessions were the poker and crap games. It was nothing for a buck private to come out of a game with two hundred dollars profit. Some lucky men won as much as nine hundred dollars within a two-hour period. Stakes were high. On one occasion a crap game was held on the fringe of a crowd attending church services. Restrained cries for "Little Joe" and his brother "Big Dick" could be heard sometimes over the text of the Good Book.

Church services were well attended. Constant thought of what possibly lay ahead of them seemed to kindle religious interest among the troops. Chaplains were more than pleased at the turnout for daily services.

The "jive" addicts gathered around the stand when the Navy orchestra started playing "lowdown" music. Daily music sessions were aided and abetted by appearances of the Regiment's own master of ceremonies, T/5 Byron Gosden, of Waterloo, Iowa, and other entertainers from the Cactus ranks. Pfc. Paul Gregory, of Salt Lake City, Utah, L Company troubador, defied the poor acoustics in that great open air theater known as the Atlantic Ocean to sing such ever popular ballads as "Old Man River" and "Old Black Joe."

Biggest musical hit was the barnstorming group that Chaplain (Capt.) Leon Davis, of West Tulsa, Oklahoma, organized for tours of the compartment circuit during the long nights. With lights out at 1800 hours there was little to do but "shoot the breeze" and exercise one's own vocal chords, so appearances of the Davis troupe were very welcome. Before the trip had been half completed, the No. 1 song on the Ship Parade was the out-of-nowhere "Quartermaster Song."

No one complained of a shortage of reading matter during the trip. Thousands of paper-bound editions of best sellers were distributed. The well-read aboard ship were reading *The Bayous of Louisiana*, *The Robe*, *Good Night, Sweet Prince*, and anything by Thorne Smith.

World news and ship events were compiled in a daily mimeographed edition called *Headlines*. Two momentous events were recorded on the pages of that publication: the untimely death of the great American,

Wendell Lewis Willkie, and the return to the Philippines of General Douglas MacArthur.

It was soon found that there could be no secrets aboard ship. When a rumor was bandied about it shortly developed that it was based on fact. Only one unfounded rumor was circulated and that was one which said that Japan had been invaded by the Red Army. If someone was informed that a sister ship in the convoy had been rammed by a freighter during the night he could be reasonably sure that the ship had been rammed.

After about a week at sea the consensus of opinion was that the convoy was bound for the recently liberated port of Marseille in Southern France. Another five days elapsed before there were definite indications of the route. When the convoy steamed past the Rock of Gibraltar into the Strait there was little doubt that Marseille was the port. To the south were the green hills of Africa and eventually the cities of Oran and Algiers, scenes of American triumphs early in the war.

About mid-day of October 20 the *Monticello* nosed into the dock at Marseille, historic city that had been captured soon after the Seventh Army of Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, Jr., stormed the beaches of Southern France on August 15. Troops were readied for debarkation but it wasn't until 1800 hours that the vessel was unloaded. Special details remained aboard to police compartments and unload duffel bags for shipment to the bivouac area.

Although the war had long since moved on to the northeast, Marseille was still a port of desolation and destruction. Despite six weeks of ceaseless work by Army engineers, there were still sunken, burned-out ships in many of the docks, rendering piers unusable. Men of labor battalions working in the area said this was the first convoy to put into Marseille.

From the pier the Regiment moved into a street at the foot of the Bluffs on which the city of Marseille is located. During disembarkation an air-raid alarm was sounded and a heavy protective smoke screen covered the area. If enemy planes were over them, the Cactusmen didn't see any bombs come down.

Burdened with packs, gas masks, horseshoe rolls and overcoats, the troops began what was reported to be a two-and-one-half-mile road march to a bivouac area. That "two-and-one-half-mile" report will undoubtedly live in the minds of the men of the 409th as one of the great understatements of World War II. Progress at first was very slow. The column would move perhaps twenty feet, then stop. This jerky movement was caused by the great number of troops on the march. In addition to the 409th there were also elements of the 100th Infantry Division en route to another bivouac area.



The U. S. flag flies over a part of Marseille untouched by the war.

Not more than five hundred feet from the dock area a truck swerved into the column, seriously injuring three men of the Century Division. The accident occurred just ahead of Company A, 328th Medical Battalion. Capt. Vincent G. Fietti, of Lynhurst, New Jersey, answered the call for medics and attended the injured men. That call for medics was to echo and re-echo during the months to come.

The column was slowly moving again. It was not long until the weight of their loads caused the men to eagerly anticipate moving into the bivouac area. In answer to questions, soldiers who were obviously stationed in Marseille would answer that the bivouac area was "just two-and-one-half-miles" forward. Eventually the men of the 409th began to think there was a bivouac area just two and one half miles from whatever point at which you happened to be around metropolitan Marseille, but that none of those bivouac areas was the one that the 409th was seeking.

After marching for eight hours the column was halted and the men ordered to rest until morning when the search for the area would be resumed. Men went to sleep that night on sharp rocks and did not know the difference. There was also a rain-storm but soldiers merely threw blankets over themselves and went back to sleep.

Daylight revealed that the column had halted in the darkness not more than five hundred yards from its goal. A survey of the so-called "bivouac area" convinced the men that it really made no difference, however. It was simply a choice of rockpiles.



Lt. Colonel Snyder and Lt. Colonel Therrell, commanders of the 3d and 1st Battalions, respectively, at the Calas bivouac area.

For the next few days experience gained on company area beautification details back at Camp Howze paid dividends. To the 409th fell the task of hewing a bivouac area out of the rocks. There was no bivouac area there, but there would be one when the Regiment departed. Slit trenches were dug behind the rows of pup tents; company streets were beautified. Latrines and garbage pits were blasted. Dynamite was used in the latter project, but entrenching tools were the only available means of digging the slit trenches with the result that very few exceeded a depth of more than one foot.

Life was rugged at Marseille, or so the doughboys thought. It was rather rough sleeping in a tent with only four blankets, a jacket and a raincoat to keep out the chilly October winds. How did those guys at the front manage with only one blanket? Little did the Cactusmen know that many times during the winter they would spend the night in a foxhole with no blanket whatsoever.

A few days after arrival the Regiment was called on to unload supplies at the docks. Supply ships were piling up at the piers and it was necessary that rations, ammunition, guns and material be delivered to the men at the front as quickly as possible. Details from the 409th worked around the clock to supplement the labors of the French workers and the port battalions.

While working on the wharves, the Army had a chance to mingle with U. S. Navy personnel. Supplies were brought into the wharves from the larger ships aboard LCIs and LSTs. The crews of most of the little fighting boats had taken part in one or more amphibious invasions.

Soldiers who worked the night shift were often invited into the galley for a nocturnal snack and an exchange of experiences.

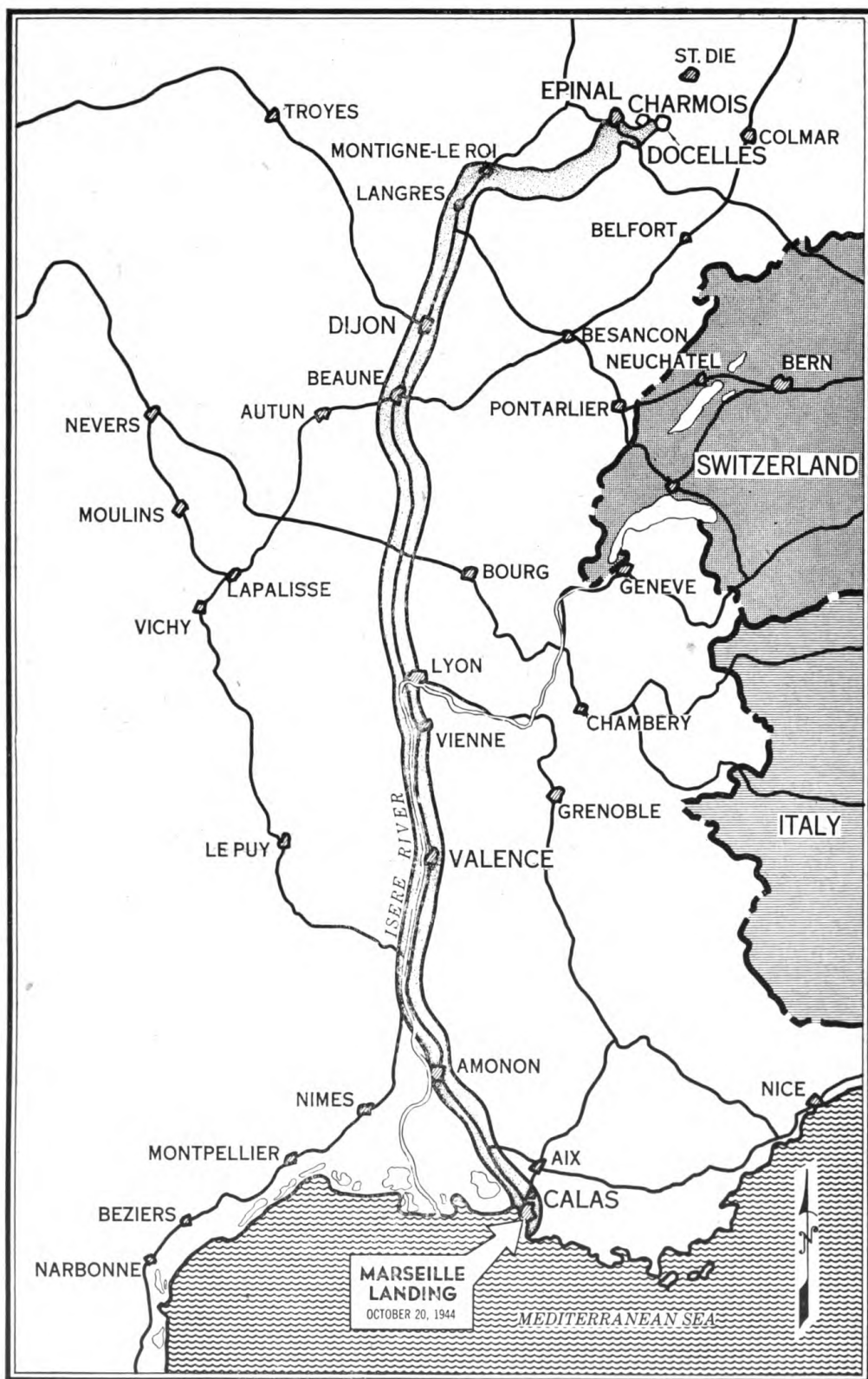
Not all trips to Marseille were made with work as the motive. After a few days a pass system was inaugurated enabling the soldiers to visit the second largest city of France for pleasure.

In the city the men of the Regiment first learned of the purchasing power of American cigarettes. There too they met other soldiers who had seen months of foreign service and were eager to barter tales of combat for stories about the America they had not seen for such a long time. Some of the men of the 409th learned of the eternal vigilance and terrible wrath of the Marseille MPs.

The city itself was satisfactory to the men who came not knowing what to expect. Because they did not know of the *Casbah* they could not miss it now that it had been destroyed by Allied air raids. The men of the Regiment were interested in Marseille as it was, in late October and early November of 1944. They will remember the wine, the cognac, the girls, the Red Cross Club, the theaters, the sidewalk cafés, the wide streets in the heart of the city, the narrow streets of the outskirts, the churches, the blue street cars, the colorful uniforms of the soldiers of many nations.

PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM OF FIRE

November 16–19, 1944



PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM OF FIRE

On the evening of November 1, an advance party from the Regiment left the bivouac area to prepare for the expected movement of the Combat Team to the front, far to the north.

Two rumors back in the States had been prevalent: This was a Regiment of the Division which would never go overseas. This was a Regiment of the Division which was to be a part of the Army of Occupation after the war! The 409th Infantry Regiment of the 103d Infantry Division was now going into combat—this was no rumor.

To men marching in columns on both sides of the road there was a bit of grim humor in the situation as they remembered that it had not been so long since they had jibed one another about "white leggings, white helmets, white belts." Tonight they knew that their mission in Europe was to be a more deadly one than the policing of conquered German territory.

In the early morning hours of November 9, 1944, the 409th was moving up to occupy front-line positions. Every man was acutely aware that soon he was to apply those lessons he had learned at Camp Claiborne and Camp Howze. The older and wiser men in the Regiment knew that soon they would be taking part in something even tougher than D series maneuvers. The former ASTP students felt they would soon be faced with problems that could not be solved by application of geometric equations and physical formulae. The youngsters who had come to Camp Howze because they had been "too young" for shipment to the combat zone knew that for future purposes they were to be considered "men" in the highest sense of the word.

During the first four days of November, the 409th had made final preparations for this movement into combat at the Delta Base Section Staging Area 2 in the vicinity of Calas, France, near Marseille. Combat Team 1, of which the Regiment formed the foundation, preceded the rest of the Division to the vicinity of Épinal, France, by motor march.

The first serial departed from Calas on the morning of November 5. The first night the column stopped near Valence, and movement was resumed the following morning to a bivouac area in the vicinity of Dijon. This was accomplished in a torrential downpour. The rain had not abated by the morning of the 7th when the column started on its way again. This move was made with full knowledge that troops were entering an area in which enemy air activity was an accepted fact and the march was made under tactical conditions.

To handle possible march casualties, two ambulances of Company A, 328th Medical Battalion, attached to the Combat Team, were placed at strategic points in the column. In each rode a medical officer and a technician. The bulk of the company rode the remaining ambulances and their other vehicles at the rear of the column.

The number of march casualties was small and consisted mostly of illnesses with only one serious injury. This occurred when a jeep failed to make a slippery turn on the third rainy day. A forward ambulance broke column to take the injured man to an evacuation hospital in Épinal. These medics had the confusing job of finding the remainder of their outfit on a dark, rainy night, but fortified with hot chow from the evacuation hospital, they finally located the company in the hilly region east of Épinal. It was late by the time the outfit reached an alternate bivouac area, the original one being inaccessible because of mud. Most of the medics decided to sleep crowded together in their vehicles rather than pitch pup-tents in the mud.

That last night, November 9, 1944, in which mixed thoughts of combat and memories of the old days back in the States echoed and re-echoed through the minds of the men, was spent in a muddy wood near the French towns of Épinal and Charmois.

The men, in their tents, listened to the rain on the canvas over them and heard in the distance the dull booming of artillery and the occasional chatter of machine guns. Some of them joked: "What are they doing, firing on the range at this time of night?" A few forced a laugh at this dry humor to break the monotony of waiting . . . waiting. . . . And some of them lay quietly, wide awake, wondering "What will it be like?" They had something of the same feeling as a little child has on the night before it starts its first day of school. . . . "What will it be like?"

Nothing they had learned in their training, nothing they had learned from soldiers who had already been in combat helped to answer the questions that gnawed at each individual's mind throughout that long night. They were not personal questions that could be answered by their platoon, company or battalion commanders but they burned in every man's mind: "Where will I be tomorrow night? How will I act under fire? Will the experience I am about to have change my personality and outlook on life? What will it be like for me?"

Slowly, the gray dawn streaked the sky. The men ate their last hot chow for some time to come and ammunition was issued. Then they stood around in true Army fashion and just waited. The questions had not yet been answered. They joked some more. "Why, this is live ammunition. Somebody's going to get hurt if we keep this up." They waited. They wondered.

Meanwhile in the Regimental CP (Command Post) plans for the day's events were rapidly taking shape. The staff took a final look at preparations. According to plan, the 2d and 3d Battalions were to relieve elements of the 7th Infantry Regiment of the 3d Infantry Division. Movement to-

ward this end was started in the morning hours of November 9, with Headquarters Company preceding the column. The weather that day was varied. It rained a little, snowed a little, and the sun shone a little.

Men of both battalions rode to their assigned areas in trucks. The 1st Battalion was to be held in reserve. Men of the 2d Battalion left their trucks and started walking, rout march, one column on each side of the road. The artillery sounded close and small-arms fire could be heard occasionally. The troops were moving into position in the Vosges Mountains, southwest of St. Dié, France. The mountains were steep and dark in the late afternoon. The questions weren't troubling the men too much now. They were finding out first-hand what it was to be like.

They talked to some of the men of the crack 3d Infantry Division, elements of which they were relieving. One GI asked timorously, "Where is the front line from here?"

"Front line?" a sergeant from the 3d laughed, the lines of North Africa, Italy and D-day in Southern France on his face, "Hell, son, you're on the front line right now."

There were a few startling events experienced by the 2d Battalion as it made its way up to the assigned positions. The sight of a frozen hand reaching frantically out of a blood-soaked German field-green sleeve from under a pile of brush . . . this was the first sight of death for the men . . . some tanks pulling out of position to be relieved by the Anti-tank Platoon of the 2d Battalion drew German artillery fire on a road just as E Company was moving in. One man was too scared to hit the ditch and stood immobile in the road. First Sgt. William H. Scott, of Atlanta, Georgia, knocked him down. A few were wounded and one man was killed . . . the first sight of American blood for the combat rookies of the 2d Battalion.

But there they were. One soldier had the courage to ask a 3d Division soldier the question on his mind, "What will it be like?"

The veteran smiled at the newcomer. "It won't be as bad as you think it is going to be."

The 2d Battalion occupied two large hills of the Vosges range southwest of St. Dié. E Company occupied the left hill with outposts in the little village of Rougville at the base of the hill in the Taintrux Valley. F Company occupied the hill on the right with similar outposts in Richardsville down in the valley. G Company was in reserve on the crest of E Company's hill on the left. In front of the battalion to the northeast across the valley of Taintrux, there were three large hills or mountains between the American troops and St. Dié. The Germans were in these hills. Their purpose was to defeat an American attack.



Cannon Company digs in at its first position from which it will support the riflemen of the 409th Infantry.

German propaganda leaflets attempted to point out the futility of American efforts to crack their mountain defenses. "It gets so cold here in the winter time," the leaflets warned, "that the gasoline will freeze in your fuel lines. Why be miserable in the terrible winter of the Vosges Mountains?" It was the general opinion of the men that they didn't intend to spend the winter in the Vosges and neither would the Germans if the GI's could help it.

Not so far away, the 3d Battalion was preparing to occupy its positions. The men had detrucked silently without the confusion and noise so often encountered. There was no hesitation. The men knew what they were doing there and were well aware of the dangers ahead.

Quickly the 3d Battalion men formed into a column of twos on either side of the road and the long treacherous hike to the company areas began. Flurries of snow and showers of rain only added to the discomfort as they trudged up the slippery mountain trail in ankle-deep mud. The trail, narrow and muddy, continued to wind around the tree-covered hills. Many men, in spite of the cold, were perspiring under their full field packs and heavy clothing.

Finally, the long-awaited call, "Break," came and the men of the 3d Battalion dropped to the sides of the road. Cigarettes were being lit when an explosion occurred, dull and ominous. A German land mine had detonated in the midst of the L Company column and the battalion suffered its first casualties. Pfc. Patrick H. Robinson, of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Pfc. Jacob A. Tillema, of Kalamazoo, Michigan, had spent their first and last day in combat. Everyone's mind housed the unanswered questions: "When? Will I be afraid? Too afraid to do my duty?" Some added a silent prayer, "Oh, God, not that!"

The 7th Infantry guides and the executive officer of each company of

the 3d Battalion who had arrived twenty-four hours earlier met the battalion at the top of a snow-covered mountain and led each company down well worn paths to its assigned area. Late that night at 2000 hours the 2d and 3d Battalions were on the line alone, nothing in front of them but cold, rain, snow, mountains and the Germans. No one to turn to—it was up to each man to make his own decisions—this was combat.

The 409th's line extended to a point less than five kilometers from St. Dié. The city had a special claim to the interest of Americans for it was here in 1507 that a geography book entitled *Cosmographiae Introductio* was written in which the editors coined the name "America" to be applied to the New World for the first time. Most of the nights while the Regiment was waiting to attack, the city was in flames, lighting up the woods with a pale, eerie light. Perhaps some of their fathers had seen the same light in World War I when St. Dié was all but destroyed by fire. Most of the fighting in the Vosges sector during the war of 1914–18 had been done on the same line occupied by the 2d and 3d Battalions in November 1944.

Several weeks after the declaration of World War I, the French began the fierce battles which eventually won back St. Dié and drove the Germans to entrench themselves east of the city in positions which they held until the Armistice. Americans were engaged in large numbers around St. Dié in 1918. After World War I the city was largely rebuilt by American engineers. Now, twenty-six years later a new American army was attempting to take and hold the city of St. Dié with its architecture reminding the men of their own United States. With their two battalions on the line and one in reserve, staff officers of the Regiment then set about seeing that positions were improved, supply problems solved and the situation improved for the next order, whatever it might be.

The all-important medics, Company A of the 328th Medical Battalion, picked their positions and settled down immediately as casualties were anticipated soon after the men hit the line. Capt. John W. Donald, of Pine Apple, Alabama, Company CO, had the bulk of the company, consisting of headquarters section, the kitchen crew, those litter bearers who were not immediately on call and the motor maintenance section, pitch tents just outside the town of Brouvelieures. The station platoon with attached ambulances and several litter squads went about two kilometers farther back and moved into a barn-like structure which at that time was being used by a collecting company of the 3d Division. It was planned that the station personnel could watch this veteran outfit in action and thus ease gradually into routine operation.

When one collecting station reached the point at which it was to be set

up the men from the station which was then operating there told the newcomers that they already had received casualties from the 409th Combat Team. The new station was therefore set up in haste.

It was well that it was. Within half an hour the first battle casualties began to arrive from the battalion aid stations. A Jerry observer apparently had sighted some of the doughboys dismounting from their trucks and moving up to prepared positions then to be vacated by the men of the 7th Infantry whom they were relieving.

There was too much for the medics to do during those next few hours for anyone to think twice about the question which had been bothering them during the preceding days of waiting, "How am I going to react to the sight of a badly wounded man?" The medics were so intent on relieving the suffering and working to save the lives of the wounded that they had no time to worry about their own sensibilities. When that first bloody hour was over they suddenly realized that they were becoming veterans without realizing it.

Another thing that helped the medics through that first experience under combat conditions was the calmness of the wounded men themselves. There was no complaining, little moaning, no impatience on their part. The rookie medics discovered that the wounded seldom cry, are never demanding, are always appreciative of what is done for them, "hate to be a bother." "Hell," said one of the technicians during the lull that followed, "one of those guys acted as though I were doing him a big favor by splinting his leg. Me doing him a favor? Imagine that!"

One wounded man didn't make the grade during that first hour. He died quietly on the table and all who had been working on him experienced the feeling of helplessness which comes to all who wage a losing fight with death. Later, one of the doctors, in commending the men for the way they had conducted themselves, reminded them that this man had died, not because of something the medics had neglected to do for him, but because he had been too badly hurt for them to save him. "You must hold the enemy to blame, not yourselves," he said. "If you've done all you can to save a man, you can't let it get you down if that all is not enough."

Out on the line, rain and snow made the doughboys' first experience in foxhole life a severe test of endurance and resourcefulness. On November 10, M Company captured the first prisoner taken by the Division and the inquisitive men of the battalion caught their first close-up of a German soldier.

Many problems confronted the 3d Battalion. Supply routes to I and K Companies were of primary concern. Both companies were inaccessible by jeep. The Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon realized this difficulty

when it had to hand-carry all ammunition, food and other supplies down the steep, muddy mountain paths to K Company. I Company men carried their supplies up another hill to the Company CP. The road from the rear battalion CP to the forward battalion CP atop the mountain was in constant need of repair. The A & P Platoon worked each day on the road until later it could be used by 2½-ton trucks.

Routine reconnaissance and patrols took place during the next six days. Men were acquainted with the ground and the location of the line Jerry was holding. Shortness of the days afforded the men much time to think. Rifle cleaning, issue of warm sleeping bags and inspection of positions were highlights. Conversation and work passed the daylight hours quickly. Hard luck continued to stalk L Company. Another accidental death was reported. At dusk cigarettes were out. Conversation was discontinued until morning. Silence prevailed. Each man was alone with his thoughts: "The attack is bound to come. Will boys become men under the stress of battle? Will we be ready? How many casualties? What was that noise? Hell, I can't sleep! Daylight, please hurry." As the battalions waited, the task before them became both mentally and physically more difficult. The German positions improved. Each day the valley seemed to grow wider.

During those six days which preceded the attack, however, life wasn't all dull monotony. The lessons learned in the States in the art of foxhole digging came in handy. Some of the men were lucky enough to be able to move into foxholes which the 3d Division had occupied. They had dug two-man foxholes and covered them with a thick layer of logs and rocks.

"It's a lot of work," the 3d Division vets said, "but it's well worth the bother when those tree bursts start coming in."

Those men who couldn't find old holes set about digging new ones. The serious business of digging in, getting used to the artillery and standing nervous hours of guard throughout the dark nights occupied a lot of time. The Bois de la Famille in which the battalions were dug in, was thick with tall oaks, pines and a European type of spruce. The thick woods contributed to making the nights as dark as blindness itself. One pair of guards in the Antitank Platoon, 2d Battalion, decided to stand an extra shift of guard after they had spent an hour and a half hunting for the foxhole of the men who were to relieve them, even though the hole they were looking for was only 75 yards from their own.

The 1st Platoon (machine gun) of H Company was assigned to E Company on the left and the 2d Platoon to F Company on the right. H Company's mortars were on the crest of E Company's hill near the Battalion CP, which was located in a little settlement of houses called Le-Haut-Jacques. The heavy mortarmen were warned of mines by the 3d



The convoy stops for a ten-minute break.

Division, but they did not take the warning too seriously until they saw a Cannon Company jeep blow up off the road beside their own positions. Pfc. Henry T. Adams of Zebulon, North Carolina, Mortar Platoon medic, rushed through the minefield to the assistance of the two wounded men in the jeep, only to be caught in the explosion of a delayed action mine and seriously wounded himself. Adams' heroic action in complete disregard for his own safety won him the Silver Star.

The A&P Platoon of 2d Battalion Headquarters Company kept themselves busy day and night clearing the road which ran from the battalion CP down the hill on the left to E Company. Headquarters Company's Antitank Platoon had two guns on this road in case the enemy should try an armored attack.

Sunday, November 12, the battalion's popular chaplain, Capt. Leon Davis, jumped from foxhole to foxhole to hold thirteen separate church services. At one service with F Company, Chaplain Davis was forced to interrupt a prayer long enough to dive into a muddy ditch when German 88s came in. Even the least religious among the men felt better to have seen this chaplain and to have bowed heads for a few moments in prayer. This was serious business and most of the men were feeling pretty serious at that time.

That same night, one of the first litter squads to go into action in the Regiment was out doing its job silently and thoroughly. T/4 George F. Hendry of Savannah, Georgia, squad leader, describes the action :

It was on the night of November 12 that my squad which consisted of Pfc. Tony Colobro, of Welch, West Virginia, Pfc. Paul Kost, of Mount Vernon, Indiana, Pfc. Chester W. Taylor, of Dade City, Florida, and myself, was called up to the 3d Battalion aid station to assist in the evacuation of casualties. K Company had run into a snag and there were several wounded to be brought out.

This being our first trip to the front, we went off without the password in the excitement. The night was pitch-black. There was snow on the ground and the thunder of ours and enemy guns was all around. We were challenged by our own guards who really scared the daylights out of us when we couldn't furnish the password.

We assisted the 3d Battalion aid station in evacuating casualties over a distance of about four miles. The hills were on a 45-degree angle which made it very difficult to carry a 200-pound man. Believe it or not, but they do have boys that big and bigger in the Army.

After making hauls up and down this steep hill all night long we were pretty much exhausted. When this particular area was cleaned out, we figured on a little rest, but no, we received word of more casualties and off we went again.

Our mission this time took us up to our extreme forward element. We crossed fields which were infested with mines but we didn't find this out until the following day when the engineers went through. On this trip we chose to

bring our casualties back through the 2d Battalion aid station, thus avoiding the climb up the steep hill we had sweated over the night before and also speeding up the movement of the wounded toward the rear.

During this time we were separated from our company for seventy-two hours and had very little food, water or sleep. But who are we to grumble? If the doughboys can take it, so can we!

The days went by, one like another. The men got used to the conditions and nerves were calmed down considerably. One night the report was received that an enemy patrol had gotten through the lines and anxious guards got a little trigger-happy, shooting at bushes that scraped trees in the darkness. Capt. Marshall G. McBee, of Cheyenne, Wyoming, coming out to inspect his guard that night was halted by one of his own guards in the darkness. The Captain couldn't tell from where the voice was coming. "Where are you, Hernandez?" he called, a little nervously.

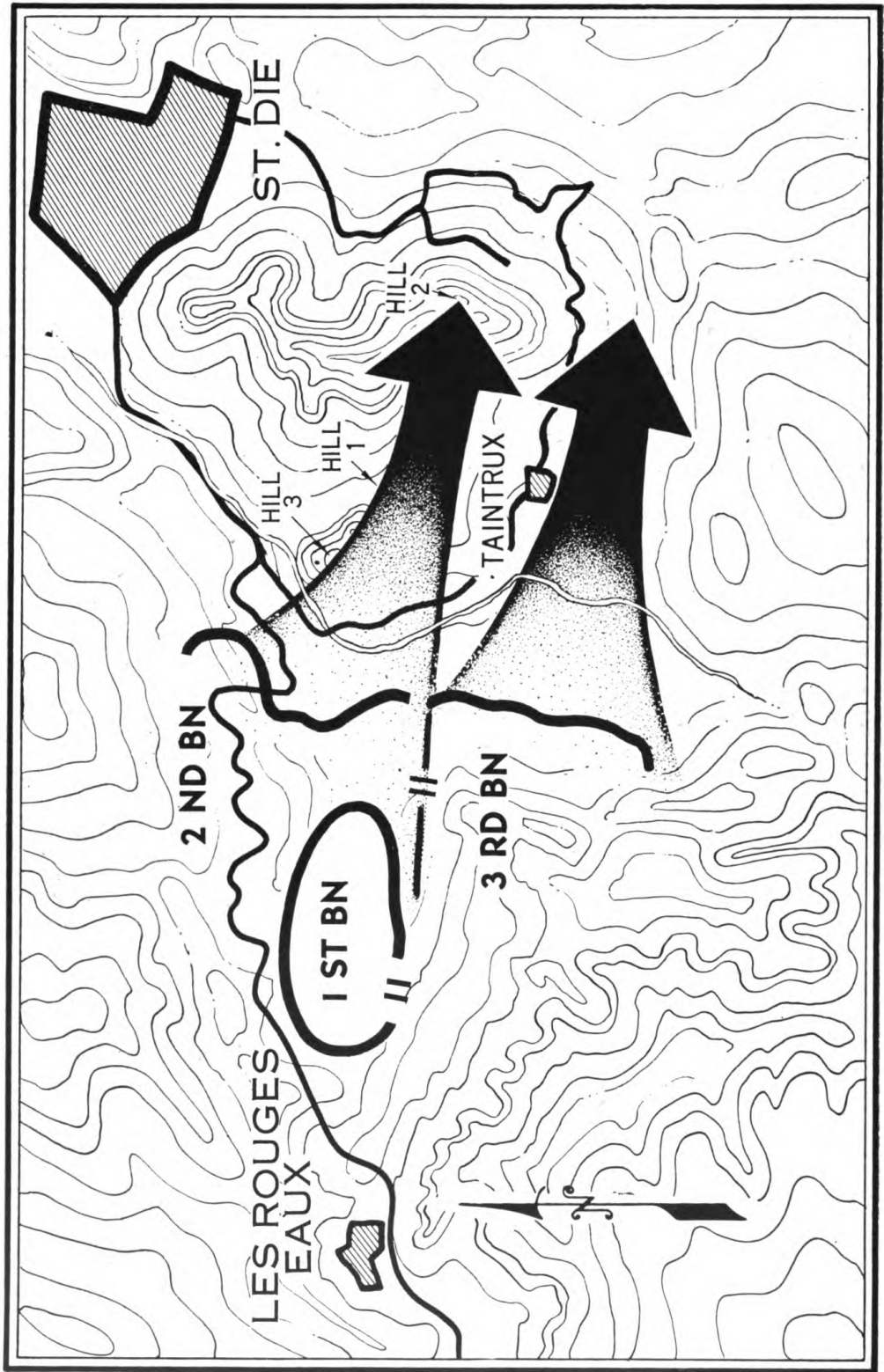
Even more nervously, from deep down in the mud where Pvt. Pancho Hernandez had hidden came the reply, "Here, sir, under the jeep."

First Lt. John J. O'Hara, of New York City, 2d Battalion S-2, went down into the valley with a patrol from F Company and was pinned down by enemy machine-gun fire for a whole day in the little town of Richardsville. This patrol was believed to be the first sent out by any unit of the 103d Infantry Division.

The days went by, one like another, and the Regiment began expecting orders to attack Jerry. Finally, on the afternoon of the 15th, those orders came.

JERRY CATCHES HELL

November 16–19, 1944



JERRY CATCHES HELL

The entire Regiment was tense as company commanders were notified on the night of November 14 that attack orders would come sometime soon. The afternoon of November 15 brought those orders. The 409th was initially committed to attack on the morning of November 16. The Division was assigned the mission of seizing and holding the high ground southwest of St. Dié. The 409th's mission was to attack, seize and hold the Division objective in the assigned zone, maintain contact with the 36th Division on the 103d's right and protect the Division's southern boundary. Only the 2d and 3d Battalions were committed, the 1st remaining in reserve prepared to move on fifteen minutes' notice. Mortars of this battalion were emplaced to support the 2d Battalion by fire. The 3d Battalion was on the southern flank, the 2d Battalion was on the north. The 382d Field Artillery Battalion was in direct support with the 384th Field Artillery Battalion and corps artillery in support of the 382d after preparation fire. That was the American plan.

On the other side of the picture was Jerry. He wanted to hold his line. If the Yanks could be held in the Vosges until the heavy snows in December, there would be a cessation of military operations. Snowdrifts 16 to 20 feet high are not infrequent in the Vosges and would definitely halt American operations. Stop the Americans for one month more, and the Rhine plain below the bend would be intact, Jerry thought. Alsace and its capital, Strasbourg, would remain in German hands. So Jerry worked hard on his defenses which in the 409th's zone centered in Taintrux, Chevry and on the east slope of the St. Dié Valley. Jerry picked his line well. To take Taintrux and Chevry meant the attacking 3d Battalion would have the long open approaches of the valley to cross.

Men were tense the night before the attack. Very few found anything to joke about. Some men found time to read a few verses from their Testaments while in the seclusion of their foxholes. Morale was high and each man had taken care of his personal hygiene very well. There were no cases of trench foot. This was due mainly to the fact that each man carried a change of socks in his pack. Six days and the men had changed from garrison to field soldiers—and they were ready.

While the soldiers prepared for action, meetings were held throughout the battalion areas as maps were checked and instructions given to company, platoon commanders and squad leaders. The meeting which took place in the dugout of Capt. Bernard Teitelbaum, of Chicago, Illinois, F Company commander, was typical of the similar meetings which took place in all companies of the Regiment that evening preceding H-hour. Captain Teitelbaum called his platoon commanders to his CP. There wasn't much doubt in anyone's mind as to what was in store for the battalion the next morning when he said, "Well, this is it!"

The Captain had just returned from 2d Battalion CP and he had the attack plan for the next morning. As the officers crouched in the five-by-five hole they called the company CP, and tried to illuminate the map with two stubby candles, there were many questions asked and answered. But there were questions in everyone's mind which were not answered and which could not be answered until the next day.

The 2d Battalion's mission was to seize and hold the three hills in front of the German positions across the Valley of Taintrux. This valley is about 500 yards wide and a small stream, the Taintrux River, flows through it.

Over on the 3d Battalion front men were alerted for the attack at 0400. Men came out of their foxholes and made last-minute preparations to leave the hill. The night was deathly black. During the descent, men frequently stumbled, knees were skinned and helmets were dropped. En route to the line of departure, I Company captured prisoner of war No. 2. The battalion swung into position on the line of departure, which was the edge of the woods bordering the open ground, before daylight, thus completing the last phase before the attack.

On the line of departure, the disposition of men was: I Company on the right, K Company on the left and L Company in reserve. M Company attached its 1st Platoon (machine gun) to K Company and the 2d Platoon to I Company. The Mortar Platoon was dug in on the forward slope of the ridge overlooking the valley. Their positions were exposed, but it was the only way the platoon could accomplish its mission and deliver supporting fire for the attacking rifle companies.

Everyone was in position. H-hour neared. Preparatory fire directed against the enemy rear was begun on time at 0845, November 16. Everyone was tense. The 382d Field Artillery was present in full strength to provide the support. Forward observers were with the attacking rifle companies and liaison officers were with the battalion commanders at their OPs. A very intense preparation had been planned and was being fired on schedule.

Riflemen had given letters to others who would stay behind . . . letters which had been written the night before by flashlights in their foxholes. Some said silent prayers. Others just champed furiously on their chewing gum.

At 0855 artillery fire was directed at enemy forward areas. 0856 . . . 0857 . . . 0858 . . . 0859 . . . the time was near.

At 0900 artillery fire ceased. The 409th Infantry Regiment was committed to its first attack.

Immediately after the last round of artillery had been fired, the scouts

hit the clearing on the double. Assault platoons of the 2d Battalion moved out of the woods 300 yards behind the scouts, a smoke screen being laid down by mortar fire to cover the movement. G Company had the 2d Platoon on the left and 1st on the right, with the 3d Platoon in reserve. The 2d and 3d Platoons were the leading platoons of E Company, while the 1st had the mission of flushing out the houses in Rougville. H and F Companies opened fire on the objective to cover the advance.

There was only one natural obstacle in crossing the valley that morning—the Taintrux River. The 2d Battalion S-2 section informed its men that the river was only about two feet deep in most places, but the attackers found it to be more than four feet deep, even over one's head in some places. When Pfc. Amsbry M. Brooks, Jr., of Cape May, New Jersey, radio operator for E Company, hit the river, he landed in a deep place well over his head and used the radio as a life preserver as he swam across the river.

E and G Companies crossed the river one way or another and entered the woods near the enemy hill. At 0940 both companies reported that they were about 100 yards in the woods and eight minutes later G Company on the left had reached a bald patch on the hill about three-quarters of the way to the summit. F Company met little resistance and by 1100 both companies had reached the summit, made contact, put out protection for the exposed right flank and were continuing to advance. Hill No. 3, the largest enemy hill, had been taken. There was one smaller hill to the right and rear of Hill No. 3 and a large one in the rear of both hills. The most difficult hill had been taken quickly and with surprisingly few casualties and the medics had handled those excellently and with bravery.

The 3d Battalion was also moving swiftly. Their attack too had started at 0900 as the artillery ceased. The 1st and 3d Platoons of K Company moved into the open quickly and started down the rolling valley. They were about 300 yards out of the woods when the wrath of hell broke loose. Machine guns pinned the scouts to the ground. Mortars and 88s from Jerry began to fall like rain on the platoons. Everyone headed for what cover was available.

The Jerry artillery and mortar fire riddled most of the 382d Field Artillery's and 409th's circuits of communication. There was only one wire left to the rear plus the artillery radio from the 3d Battalion OP. Artillery targets were so numerous that some missions were not conducted strictly according to the manual. Capt. Gerald R. Zeek, of Boonton, New Jersey, 3d Battalion S-3, was relaying fire missions from the companies to Capt. William D. Bowen, of Spanish Fork, Utah, artillery liaison officer, who was sending them on to Fire Direction Center. In

addition, Captain Bowen was often firing one or two missions of his own simultaneously. Thus it was that, at times, there were as many as four fire missions going on at once, with all of them going to Fire Direction Center over the one wire and the artillery -609 radio, but effective fire resulted.

The infantrymen meanwhile were having their troubles—and plenty of them—out in their first taste of “No Man’s Land.” The 3d Platoon of K Company led by 2d Lt. Victor A. Pederson, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, was caught in a terrific cross fire of machine-gun and rifle fire and had to run, crawl and scramble to get into the draw near the already dispersed and covered 1st platoon.

Acts of heroism were taking place in every sector, but no one paid much attention as the cry for medics was increasing. K Company, commanded by Capt. Joseph Bell, of Pittsburg, Kansas, had to move and move quickly. It had to take care of machine-gun fire in a house to the company’s right front. 1st Lt. John H. Kirby, of St. Paul, Minnesota, and Pfc. Robert Lukov, of Seattle, Washington, dashed across the terrain to a forward position where they quickly organized one of the squads and made an attack on the house. Rifle grenades took care of the machine gun and the squad moved to the house. Pfc. Elmer Cowan wanted to throw a grenade into the barn and called “grenade” to the men. They waited several seconds until finally over the din of battle one could hear his drawling voice shout, “Who in the hell’s got a grenade?” The grenade was given to Cowan, thrown and the entrance gained.

Meanwhile the 2d Platoon under 2nd Lt. Samuel S. Monk, Jr., of McRae, Georgia, was maneuvering to the flank under intense fire in order to gain the initiative. The platoon met superior fire and was forced to draw back to the former position but not until some of the K Company men had fallen wounded. The Weapons Platoon of K Company, under the command of 1st Lt. Runa S. White, of Maryville, Tennessee, was dishing out its share of destruction for the Jerries. Machine guns were throwing out slugs and mortars were coughing regularly although the Jerries zeroed in on their positions. They never faltered and never eased the pressure throughout the entire day’s engagement. In the meantime, I Company was also having its difficulties. The first enemy fire was drawn by the 3d Platoon led by 2nd Lt. Willard W. Herbert, of Lake Charles, Louisiana, which was on the company’s left flank. The men hit the ground immediately and took up the fire fight. From well organized positions in the village of Chevry to the company’s front, Jerry was able to deliver effective sniper fire. Several times the 3d Platoon tried moving forward. Each time they were repulsed. Pfc. Robert L. Ramsey, of Indianapolis,

Indiana, platoon medic, was a busy man administering first aid to the wounded under continuous sniper fire. His tireless effort on this first day in combat was repaid by his being awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

2nd Lt. Robert E. Kruger, of Everett, Washington, with the 1st Platoon of I Company on the right flank reported to 1st Lt. Alvis H. Jinks, of Anniston, Alabama, that his platoon sergeant and his platoon medic lay wounded in an open field. T/Sgt. John C. Rilly, of Detroit, Michigan, after hearing of the lieutenant's intention of rescuing the two men, volunteered to go along. The mission was successfully accomplished, saving the lives of T/Sgt. Francis N. Wright, of Detroit, Michigan, and T/5 Arthur J. Merritt, of Chicago, Illinois. Lieutenant Kruger and Sergeant Rilly were awarded the Silver Star for their action.

During the morning, tanks and antitank guns of the 3d Battalion were unable to give support to the attacking companies. The tanks stuck in the muddy mountain trails and blocked the movement of the antitank guns. The tanks had been attached to the 3d Battalion for the action.

About 1050 hours, the telephone in the 3d Battalion CP rang. It was Captain Zeek, Battalion S-3, who was at the OP (Observation Post).

"Mortars have hit the OP. The Colonel, Lutz and a few more have been hit. Get some aidmen out here."

Lt. Nathan Becker, of Roxbury, Massachusetts, and a litter squad hurried toward the OP, which the Jerries had easily picked out that morning. It had been constructed at night on the edge of the woods and afforded excellent observation, but it offered little protection from the Jerry mortars and artillery. Lieutenant Becker and his litter squad evacuated Lt. Alonzo Lutz, of Miamisburg, Ohio, CO of M Company and two others. Lt. Col. Alvin Snyder of New York City, slightly wounded, stayed in the OP until 1625 hours when Major Burkitt A. Reynolds, of Los Angeles, California, relieved him and assumed command of the battalion.

The 2d Battalion also had its share of bad luck during the day. Attached to the 1st Platoon of E Company, Pfc. Henry G. England, of Canton, Georgia, of the Medical Detachment, had moved out with his platoon in the attack. It was only a few minutes later that the call "medic," "medic," was heard. Small-arms fire from the hill to the front temporarily pinned the platoon down. In an instant Private England was on his feet moving forward, a medical kit his only weapon, a Red Cross helmet his only protection.

In the middle of the fire fight, Private England began giving first aid. Despite shouts of warning, the medic stayed on the job. Then he was hit—a painful injury in the groin—but he went back to work. He injected

his patient, then himself, with morphine and administered first aid to the patient before pain forced him to cease.

Sgt. Howard H. Blaske, of Sauk Center, Minnesota, aid man attached to the second platoon of G Company, was determined to aid his wounded buddies regardless of what the Jerries had to offer. Sergeant Blaske, following with the reserve squad, was well concealed behind an embankment when he saw the platoon runner fall to the ground. Certain that the man had been wounded, Blaske ran to apply first aid. He found the doughboy bleeding profusely. While Sergeant Blaske was reaching in his kit for a tourniquet, the Jerry sniper took another shot.

Later describing the sensation as a white light exploding in his head, Sergeant Blaske fell unconscious to the ground. Coming to with a buzzing in his head and blood on his face, the medic realized that he had been hit. He turned to inquire how his patient was getting along when the Jerry sniper fired again, this time hitting Sergeant Blaske in the fingers. Conscious enough to realize that he himself was too far gone to aid his buddy, the sergeant staggered for the cover of the river about 25 feet ahead.

A few minutes later, Pvt. Walter E. Slavens, of Hackett, Arkansas, medic of the 1st Platoon, came to assist Sergeant Blaske in giving medical treatment. While working on a man who lay near the river, Slavens was also hit. He crawled into the shallow water and along with Sergeant Blaske remained in the water six hours. At 1430 a patrol rescued these men.

As G Company approached its objective another aid man, T/5 Norman E. Kitzman, of Long Prairie, Minnesota, was wounded. Corporal Kitzman was busily engaged in caring for the men of his platoon when a mortar barrage interfered. Everyone dispersed including the guards escorting German prisoners. When the barrage subsided, Corporal Kitzman found himself not over 30 feet from a German, formerly a prisoner, now armed with a machine gun. Ignoring the Geneva cross, the Jerry fired on the aid man. Bullets entered Kitzman's wrist in three places, but the Jerry was killed in action a few minutes later when Kitzman's buddies came to the rescue.

As darkness fell over the front, the 3d Battalion was pinned down by machine-gun fire and forced to remain in position along a front known as Phase Line A. The 2d Battalion reached Phase Line B, contacting the 411th Regiment on its left. Positions were dug in for the night and outposts established.

Morale among the casualties of all battalions that first day in combat was high. Battalion chaplains (the 409th Regiment had a chaplain attached to each battalion) reported that men joked with one another while

being treated at battalion aid stations. Many wounded left in places where daylight evacuation was impossible had to be taken out at night. The terrain from the valley to the forward aid station was steep, mountainous and slippery with mud. Every man of the Medical Detachment was used as a litter bearer, plus eight men borrowed from the 3d Battalion collecting company section, the A&P Platoon, company clerks, runners and the graves registration team. The 3d Battalion evacuation was completed at 1030 the following day, 25 hours after it had first begun.

As the men rested after their first day of combat, many thoughts ran through their minds. It had been a tough day. Rifle squads, machine-gun sections and communications men had sweated and fought, inching ahead in a path of blood. Darkness was never more welcome than it was at the end of that first day. Up until that time, the least movement had brought a barrage of artillery or mortar fire. When the firing finally ceased, the battalions at once began to reorganize in order to continue the attack the next day. Company commanders and platoon leaders were oriented on the plan. Men occupied their positions and attempted to get a little much-needed rest. One could only call it rest as very few men slept that night. The same thought was running through the minds of all: "Will tomorrow bring another day like today?" In K Company, the 1st Platoon slept in a barn along with six stinking cows which had been dead for days. They were too exhausted to care.

That night both E and G Companies were hit by an extremely heavy enemy mortar barrage and suffered more casualties than they had in the day's attack. It was a long night, especially for those who had to lie wounded in their foxholes, awaiting evacuation.

A low-hanging fog provided excellent concealment for the renewal of the 3d Battalion's attack the following morning. At 0725, the softening-up process by the artillery began. Little resistance was experienced. As the battalion approached its objective, definite signs of Jerry were found. Enemy equipment had been scattered about in his hasty withdrawal. Evidence of meals being prepared was found in several homes. As K Company passed through Taintrux and I Company through Chevry, the civilians informed them that the Germans had left only 30 minutes prior to the American arrival. The villagers were overjoyed. Cognac, wine and a new form of liquid "embalming fluid" called *Schnapps* were pushed into eager hands. It filled the hearts of the men to see the children smile and to see the looks of astonishment on their pinched faces when a K ration candy bar was offered to them.

Proudly the 3d Battalion pushed through to its first objective, the high ground southeast of St. Dié.

The 2d Battalion was also having a relatively easy day of combat on the 17th of November. For some reason almost everyone felt that the battalion had gained its objective and would merely be required to hold it. They soon found out this assumption was not correct. With the dawn of the 17th came the order that F Company would take Hill 2 to the right and rear of hill 3. It didn't take long to form the company and to start the trip across the open valley toward Hill 2, from the houses in Richardsville. F Company moved out at 0730 after an artillery preparation.

Everyone in the battalion had his fingers crossed in hope that Jerry had pulled off Hill 2 after G and E Companies had taken Hill 3. But the hill was in a good position to observe the entire valley and there was a chance Jerry had decided to hang on. F Company moved across the ground at a fast walk and headed straight for Hill 2. When they hit the base of the hill and started up, everyone soon discovered what men in the other two rifle companies had experienced the morning before. There was plenty of underbrush and the hill was very steep. Captain Teitelbaum called a halt before deciding how to move to the top of the hill. He decided to have the company drop packs and remove extra equipment to facilitate passage through the dense underbrush. He sent the 1st Platoon around to the left side of the hill and the 2d and 3d were to move up on the front and right sides.

The Company started moving again. Orders were for the lead squads to move out and keep on the lookout while the support squads would check the dugouts.

The company finally arrived at the top of the hill. It was 1400 and everyone hoped to be able to dig in and hold. In fact, some of the battalion even had visions of spending the night in a lookout building that was found in the rocks on top of the hill.

After some difficulty due to weak batteries, Captain Teitelbaum finally succeeded in reaching battalion by radio and reported that the objective was taken and that the company was preparing to dig in. No resistance had been met, he declared. Battalion, however, ordered that the company would move on to Hill 1 and meet G Company on the summit. F Company would have the right side of the hill, G the left.

About 1500 the two companies started up Hill 1. They had learned from a French civilian that the enemy had abandoned at least the base of the hill the afternoon before, moving up the hill on the road to St. Dié. F Company started up this road, G Company moving up farther to the left. At about 1645 hours the companies had reached a point just below the crest without meeting any opposition and decided to hold there for the

night. F Company had no contact with the battalion except with the radio faintly and indirectly through E Company. The companies had had no rations for a day. They were hungry and the night was cold. They had dropped their rolls back on Hill 2. Some men dug all night just to keep warm.

S/Sgt. Robert Meares, of LaGrange, North Carolina, F Company's communications sergeant, finally reached battalion by radio. A message came through, but due to faint reception and the lack of light, Sergeant Meares was unable to make out the contents of the message.

Meanwhile, back at the medical platoon, the men with the red crosses on their helmets were beginning to rest on their laurels as the first rush slackened. The station platoon had moved up to a small French farmhouse in Les-Rouges-Eaux near a road fork which joined two roads leading to the sectors assigned to the two battalions on the line. From this point the station treated the litter cases and ambulance platoons evacuated over a hundred patients during the first five days of fighting. Some casualties were German prisoners, the first that the medics had seen at close range.

After a reconnaissance of the narrow, rutted roads leading from the battalion aid stations down the mountain to Les-Rouges-Eaux, it was decided that the road from 3d Battalion was too dangerous for ambulances to attempt a trip after dark. It was a difficult trip even in the daytime. Even a jeep would have had difficulty in a blackout. Casualties coming in at night would have to be kept at the battalion aid stations until morning, as the ambulance drivers were instructed not to make the trip at night. Everyone hoped there would be no seriously wounded night casualties.

But war is no respecter of persons or conditions. Pfc. Raymond W. Pirtle, of Chariton, Iowa, decided to try the run, fully aware that a slip might send his vehicle over the mountain side. With Pfc. Francis C. Suggs, of Johns Island, South Carolina, and Pfc. Charles A. Hughes, of Trenton, Michigan, lying on the fenders to guide him, he made four trips down and back, carrying full loads each time. Although the run was only two miles one way, it took an hour to make the round trip. Casualties kept coming in and a second ambulance driven by Pfc. John Carson, of Peoria, Illinois, with Pfc. Clay King, of Paducah, Kentucky, as his assistant, was sent up the mountain to help. These two crews worked all night to evacuate casualties over the "impassable" road.

With the hills in American hands, the following day, November 18, saw little but patrol actions by both battalions. Defensive positions had been established. F Company sent a guide and 30 men to lead officers from

the 411th Infantry Regiment, which was to relieve the 409th, up to the line. The 30 men were to pick up the packs which had been left behind.

By 0937, November 19, the Regiment had been relieved and the battalions entered their bivouac areas in the vicinity of Les-Rouges-Eaux.

The success and effectiveness of the part played by the 409th in its first combat mission is attested to by a letter dated December 6, 1944, and received by the Commanding General of the 103d Infantry Division from Maj. Gen. Edward H. Brooks, Commanding General of the VI Corps, commending the Division on the capture of the dominant terrain southwest of St. Dié prior to the Corps attack.

The first attack was over. In their first highly successful engagement the men had learned the nature of combat. They weren't veterans by any means but they knew what combat was.

STEIGE AND LUBINE

November 20–27, 1944



STEIGE AND LUBINE

It was not many hours before the 409th Infantry was withdrawn to launch an attack from a different direction. The Regiment was assigned the mission of protecting the Division's right flank in an encircling movement north of St. Dié with its immediate objective the capture of Ville. On the afternoon of November 20, having had only twenty-four hours of rest, the battalions moved out again, by truck this time to the vicinity of Nompatelize, France. After detrucking, troops immediately moved forward to cross the Meurthe River, a crossing which was accomplished amid heavy rains over a footbridge not passable for vehicles. Early on the morning of November 21, the troops closed into their positions on the Meurthe. With bridges repaired and checked, the Regiment's motor vehicles were able to cross about noon and by nightfall the Regiment was established in the vicinity of Hurbache, France.

The Medical Battalion had its hands full keeping up with the fast move of the Regiment. On the night of November 20, the station platoon and attached ambulances and litter bearers had set out on a move over mountain roads to put them in position for the Combat Team's crossing of the Meurthe River. The winding road was lighted momentarily from time to time by the flash of our supporting artillery.

A few hundred yards away a dense smoke screen was covering the footbridge over which the troops were making their crossing. The medics watched the long line of OD-clad figures wind past the station on down to go across the river. In small dejected-looking groups, gray-clad prisoners plodded in the opposite direction under the ready guns of the MPs.

On the night of November 21, a badly wounded prisoner was brought in. His breathing was labored and his general condition very poor because of a big sucking wound of the chest. After the men in the station had plugged the opening and given him plasma, he picked up but it was obvious that he would have to be evacuated that night if he were to live. The Clearing Company by that time was about 30 kilometers to the rear and the only road was another narrow, winding one over the mountains. There was no moon.

Pfc. Alfred J. Kopveiler, of Wadena, Minnesota, and Pfc. Roy J. Barnett, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, were the ambulance drivers next on call. One of the medical officers put it up to them: "This man is a German, and I won't ask you to risk that dangerous haul if you would rather not go. I doubt, however, if he will live until morning unless he gets further treatment. You can make your own decision."

It did not take the drivers long to decide. Within five minutes the prisoner was on his way back through the darkness to Clearing Company.

Meanwhile, things were popping rapidly in the rifle battalions as special assignments were being handed out. With the river crossing behind them,



1st Battalion troops advance across open ground after crossing the Meurthe River.

patrols were sent out in the early hours of November 22 and finding no sign of Jerry opposition, the Regiment moved forward once again, this time establishing its CP at St. Jean d'Ormont. Troops of the 2d Battalion were bivouacked in the forest north of la Hollande. Tired and wet after the crossing made in the face of bitter November weather, the doughs of the 2d Battalion and their officers were anxious to push on into a village where shelter could be found. Only in combat one week and the men of the 409th already had begun to think like veteran, line soldiers.

During the night of November 21, Major Lloyd L. Hanes, of Norfolk, Virginia, battalion commander, was ordered to form a task force. Captain Teitelbaum's F Company was assigned to the force as well as a patrol from G Company led by Lt. George Holtz, Jr., of Mount Vernon, New York.

The men of F Company and the patrol members from G Company were elated at the prospect of riding into battle aboard Seventh Army armor. Here was big time stuff. This was the way the infantry had come up from the beaches of Southern France. This was how General Patton had stormed across Normandy to the approaches of Metz and Nancy.

Designated as Task Force Hanes, the armor and attached infantry moved out of la Hollande. At 0730 hours on November 22, command of remaining units of the 2d Battalion reverted to Capt. Earl Roth, of Akron, Ohio, battalion executive officer. Captain Roth was ordered to move the foot troops into Marzelay. Upon closing into this village at 1530 hours, E Company under the command of Capt. John Stevenson, of Quogue, New York, was called on to clear St. Dié of all the enemy north of the Meurthe River. E Company spent the night clearing the city, and on the following morning, Thanksgiving Day, returned to Marzelay by motor.

In spite of the rain and the desolation that was Marzelay, the men of the 2d realized that there was much to be thankful for on this Thanksgiving Day, 1944. They had heard the burp gun. They had listened to the 88 sing its hymn of hate. They had hugged the earth time and again when mortar shells crashed around them. They had learned that antiaircraft flak was as much a threat to them as it was to the men in the sky. One week in the fight and they had not been stopped. That in itself was something for which they could be thankful.

Chaplain Leon Davis held service in a barn for men of all faiths. After services the talk turned to home. Thanksgiving in the States seemed far away to the men who had been in New York City on pass only two months ago. Inevitably two Texas boys made a bet on the outcome of the Lone Star State's Thanksgiving Day football classic, Texas U *vs.* Texas A & M.

The men of the 3d Battalion had no time for more than a spiritual Thanksgiving. Pushing forward along the muddy roads of France, the men of I, K, L and M Companies could not pause for turkey and the trimmings. Thanksgiving was a hollow holiday for the 1st Battalion, too. While turkey was being prepared in captured Lubine, orders came down moving the 1st Battalion toward Steige.

Meanwhile, the 2d Battalion, originally destined for La Petite Fosse, was given a new objective. The change in plans came as a result of difficulties encountered by Task Force Hanes. Enemy demolitions and swollen streams made the route impassable for armored operations. Captain Roth's troops were taken by motor transport to Colroy-la-Grande where they were rejoined by the patrol from G Company. The battalion then proceeded on foot through Lubine clearing the path as it advanced.

Marching rapidly the 2d Battalion swung past the hairpin turn at Fouillaupre, pressed on up the road to a point two kilometers northeast of Lubine. After making another turn, the point consisting of Lt. Emanuel Brenner's 1st Platoon of E Company encountered an *abatis* road block. In past operations such blocks were evidence that the enemy had evacuated the area. As the point moved up to clear a path through what looked to be just another passive roadblock, the enemy covered the *abatis* with cross fire from automatic weapons. The German field of fire made further maneuver extremely hazardous.

In an effort to eliminate the enemy weapons Captain Roth, acting in the capacity of battalion commander, called on G Company to advance on the right flank. Lt. Albert J. Robertazzi, of Washington, District of Columbia, led G Company to a position in the woods above the German guns. Before the company could go into action, fire from another position

made the spot untenable. Lieutenant Robertazzi ordered his troops to withdraw and rejoin the battalion. After striving all day to dislodge a resourceful foe from his positions, most of the battalion withdrew to Fouillaupre that night.

Morning brought new weapons to the battalions. For the first time, the men of the 409th saw the much-heralded 4.2 chemical mortars. At dawn the Chemical Platoon crews put 300 rounds into the small area around the roadblock. Close behind the barrage, the infantry moved up.

In spite of the intense mortar fire the enemy was still very much in evidence. His machine guns still commanded the road. His burp guns had not been silenced. The battalion was pinned down again.

An E Company attempt in platoon strength to knock out the German entrenchments was also beaten back. Self-propelled antitank guns firing flat-trajectory weapons into the area could not eliminate this strongpoint. Progress of the battalion was held up for the rest of the morning. Endeavoring to find a route to bypass the road a patrol led by Lt. Avel O. Henneke, of Drummond, Oklahoma, went into the hills on the right.

In mid-afternoon doughty Regimental Commander Col. Claudius L. Lloyd, Baltimore, Maryland, arrived for an on-the-spot reconnaissance. He and a member of his staff walked boldly up the road until they were in the vicinity of the *abatis*. Machine-gun slugs cracked over their heads. Instinctively they hit the ground. In a moment the Colonel scrambled to his feet and in his rasping voice said to no one in particular, "Ya see, there's nothing up there but a - - - - - machine gun!" As the Colonel walked back along the road, the men in the ranks knew that here was an "Old Man" under whom they could be proud to serve.

Upon the return of Lieutenant Henneke's patrol, all intelligence pertaining to the enemy was consolidated. A plan was formulated immediately. It was decided that the 3d Battalion would swing by the 2d on a route through territory Lieutenant Henneke had reconnoitered, enter the town of Urbeis and effect an encirclement of enemy positions.

Within a few minutes, supply vehicles loaded with ammunition moved into the hairpin turn. I, K and L Company doughboys were issued additional .30 caliber ammunition and grenades of all types in preparation for the downhill assault on Urbeis. There was no definite knowledge of Wehrmacht strength in the town. A French patriot who claimed to have extensive knowledge of the terrain was assigned to K Company.

With this one-armed Frenchman showing the way, I and K Companies swept silently through the rugged terrain in the first of a series of unorthodox maneuvers that were to plague the Germans throughout the Vosges campaign. Lt. Alvis Jinks, of Anniston, Alabama, I Company

commander, and Captain Bell, K Company commander, sent their men sweeping down on the small village outside Urbeis at a pace that was almost a trot. A K Company patrol sent into Urbeis came back to report no sign of the enemy. Both companies entered the town, searching the buildings as they moved forward. Only one prisoner was taken, but the withdrawal had been so swift the Germans had abandoned a warehouse containing tons of grenades, mines and demolitions.

Verbal orders to hold during the night were dispatched to the 3d Battalion. L Company had been sent back to guard Regimental headquarters during the execution of this extremely daring flank attack.

Men of the 2d Battalion, meanwhile, readied themselves for another attack against the roadblock. Troops were disposed so the main body would be atop the German positions. At dawn of November 26, one platoon with attached heavy machine guns was to cover the expected route of enemy withdrawal. When the troops swept down from the crest of the hill, they met nothing but the silence of the early morning. According to a French family, a strong German force had quit the positions at approximately 0230 hours.

With no further bar to their progress the companies of the 2d reformed at Col d'Urbeis, marched through Urbeis, paused at Fouchy while the battalion commander received new orders from Regiment and continued on to La Laye. The battalion rested at La Laye for three nights and two days.

During this action, the medical company had been keeping up with the combat units. Some of the company had missed its Thanksgiving dinner because a medical unit was required for Task Force Hanes. This consisted of three ambulances and two litter squads to go with the troops. These men lived in the vehicles for the eight days the Task Force saw action and traveled just behind the troops, close enough for an aid man from one of the detachments to be injured by small-arms fire as he was standing behind one of the ambulances.

Capt. Stanley Sahn, of Brooklyn, New York, 2d Battalion surgeon, had his aid station set up in one of the ambulances and thus maintained a mobile installation for quick care of the wounded who were then evacuated to whatever collecting company happened to be nearest the task force at the time. It was during this period that drivers Pfc. Patrick J. McBride, of Chicago, Illinois, and Pfc. Alvin A. Buchanan twice made runs forward to the edge of a town in which fighting still was under way to pick up casualties directly from the battlefield. Ordinarily ambulances were not sent forward to aid stations. Mines, of course, had not been cleared from the shoulders on which the drivers had to turn their vehicles around

but their luck held. McBride at one time caused a stir by remaining in the bottom of a water-filled ditch with his head completely submerged for an alarming period of time while 88s fell nearby. Evidence of life was apparent only in the appearance of bubbles each time a shell hit in the vicinity.

Meanwhile the medical unit had moved from Hurbache to St. Jean d'Ormont. While in Hurbache the company had received word that there was a child sick with diphtheria in St. Jean d'Ormont. The outfit sent back for and received some diphtheria antitoxin through the Division medical supply officer, Capt. Herbert Gillespie, who had gone all the way to Épinal to get it. After the wounded Americans had been cared for, Captain Donald and one of the other medical officers, Capt. John G. Sholl, of Shaker Heights, Ohio, set out late at night with the serum to find the child.

After much door-knocking, the child was finally located and found to be critically ill, signs of respiratory distress from the diphtheria membrane in her throat already being evident. The serum was administered and Captain Sholl stayed with the little girl until he was sure she would be all right for the rest of the night. He had instruments handy for an emergency tracheotomy should that become necessary.

The next morning she was not improved enough to leave without medical care and since it was evident that the company soon would be moving forward again, permission was obtained from Lt. Col. James E. Easton, of Akron, Ohio, Division Surgeon, to take her by jeep to the nearest available civilian hospital located in Épinal, a round trip of some 90 miles. The gratitude of her parents was reward enough for whatever contribution this may have made to her probable recovery.

When elements of the 1st Battalion arrived in La Laye for billeting, doughboys from E, G and H Companies rushed around to tell their buddies about fighting at the roadblock. But they didn't get too much of a chance to recite their adventures. No sooner had they begun their story than the A, B, C and D Company men of the 1st Battalion would want to know, "Did you hear what we did over at Steige?"

The story of the capture of Steige goes something like this: Lubine had fallen to the doughboys of the 1st Battalion at 1700 hours on November 24. Lt. Col. Teal Therrell, of Bennettsville, South Carolina, battalion commander, immediately set up a network of roadblocks and outposts around the town. After nine days of ceaseless sloughing through rugged Vosges terrain, the troops welcomed this lull in hostilities. Good rumors were circulating. The day-late turkey dinner was being readied in the kitchens. The battalion was to be relieved shortly.



Top, left: Lt. Col. Teal Therrell, commander of the 1st Battalion through training and combat. ***Top, right:*** Lt. Col. Louis K. Hennighausen, commander of the 2d Battalion in combat from December 1944. ***Bottom, left:*** Lt. Col. Burkitt A. Reynolds, commander of the 3d Battalion. ***Bottom, right:*** Capt. Albert J. Potter, regimental S-2.

Only one half hour after Lubine had been liberated, those rumors were exploded by the sharp pin of reality. The exigencies of total war made no allowance for such luxuries as turkey and relief would come in good time. At the moment there was more pressing business.

A large enemy force was reported withdrawing through the Vosges passes toward the town of Steige. This was part of a once-proud German Army now reeling under the coordinated blows of the Seventh Army. Like a prize fighter on the ropes, the Germans had been back-pedaling furiously in an effort to avoid a knockout.

The important and strenuous task of further destroying the foe was assigned to the 1st Battalion. Lt. Colonel Therrell was ordered to infiltrate his entire battalion through enemy lines and proceed to Steige where the retreating Germans might be intercepted.

The most direct route to Steige was through the hills, seven miles over the roughest terrain in the European Theater. It was the straight line route for these amazingly adaptable GIs who had been converted into capable mountain troops in less than ten days.

When dusk had come to the valley, the heavily laden troops moved out of Lubine. Speed was the primary concern of the mission for the regimental commander wanted Steige contained by early morning. A fire fight was to be avoided en route if it was possible. With this fact in mind three German-speaking soldiers were placed at the head of the column in the hope that they might fast-talk their way past the German sentries. Such was the strategy resorted to in this weird guerrilla-like warfare.

Only one mile out of Lubine the linguists were given an opportunity to exercise their power of persuasion. An alert German sentry was not to be fooled. A flare went up. A burp gun chattered. As at a silent signal, every man moved off the trail.

For almost ninety minutes the Germans continued to fire. Enemy mortars were brought into play. The excellent training and discipline of the men of the 1st Battalion paid heavy dividends on this occasion. The enemy drew no return fire from our troops. When firing ceased for a period, elements of the battalion did an about-face and moved noiselessly away from this sticky sector. There was nothing to tip off the Germans that an entire battalion had stopped along the trail.

Attempts were made to find other routes through the enemy lines. Probers were sent out but could find no holes in the now-alerted defenses. Lt. Colonel Therrell's decision was to bivouac for the night and continue to push to Steige the following morning.

A position atop a hill was chosen. There could be no digging in. The proximity of the enemy and the inky darkness made it necessary to feel

the boot of a fellow soldier to reassure yourself he was not wearing hob-nailed shoes. At dawn it was proven that such caution was essential. Some platoons found Germans asleep within the American bivouac area!

When the push was resumed, A and B Companies were in line with C Company in reserve. The reserve company's mission was to protect the open right flank. Early in the afternoon, C Company hit a strong enemy emplacement. A and B Companies moved on while C (the reserve company) worked on the strongpoints.

At 1600 hours the forward companies were on the heights overlooking the battalion objective. It was important that the town be taken before dark lest the attack be delayed another day. Still minus the reserve company and without supporting mortars, Lt. Colonel Therrell formulated plans for immediate attack. Reconnaissance revealed the much needed element of surprise would favor a sudden assault. The enemy seemed blissfully unaware of the operation taking shape above his position. No security outposts could be seen and a strange-looking German field kitchen seemed to be in operation.

Lt. Colonel Therrell's plan of maneuver was such that "strategists from Benning would sit up and take notice," according to a battalion reporter who witnessed the action. The colonel felt that his small force could cut the German retreat route by taking and holding one-third of the town. Accordingly, A Company moved out of a finger of woods, along a trail, and, with overhead fire from B Company and attached units of D Company, burst into the open. The combination of surprise and deadly fire was too much for the Jerries. They were out of the fight almost as soon as it had begun. Company A alone bagged 121 prisoners in addition to matériel.

Shortly after completion of the mission, C Company rejoined the battalion. Roadblocks were erected and security posted. It was still anybody's town. The enemy launched vigorous counterattacks from his west end holdings in an effort to regain what he had lost. The German attacks also served to protect rear elements of a Wehrmacht field artillery brigade and hospital equipment which were presently neutralized by the swiftness of the American assault.

Though D Company weapons were captured during the night, the counterassault was repulsed. After five hours of aggressive activity, the enemy suddenly ceased firing.

At noon the following day food and ammunition came up on D Company jeeps which had fought through the enemy defense ring. Heroes of this incident were rugged six-foot-four, 225-pound 1st/Sergeant William T. Hollis, of Lapeer, Michigan, top-kick of D Company, and his compe-



The 1st Battalion returns victorious from Steige.

tent staff of jeep drivers. When he was given his T/O weapon, Sergeant Hollis had been issued a carbine. But a 5 1/4-pound carbine is rather small for a man of his size so when Sergeant Hollis spotted an abandoned BAR he picked it up.

As the convoy was driving along through the darkness on the night of November 26 endeavoring to get through to units of the 1st Battalion, an enemy patrol opened fire on the front and the rear of the convoy. Sergeant Hollis, without any regard for his personal safety, advanced toward the patrol spraying lead with his BAR. Results : three enemy dead, one wounded and the remainder routed.

The convoy got through and the men received the much-needed supplies. For his courage, Sergeant Hollis was awarded the Silver Star. Later, in recognition of this and many other outstanding accomplishments, 1st Sergeant Hollis was commissioned a second lieutenant.

In mid-afternoon that day an armored column which had been under observation was reported as Task Force Hanes. Contact was made with the armor and later contact was made to the rear. The task force pushed through to attack St. Martin and Ville as the 1st Battalion moved to its assembly area.

Men of the Regiment were aware of a radical change when they marched into La Laye on November 26. The familiar blue road signs

were gone. Orange signs were in their place with names of places in black letters. Names on stores and residences were definitely Teutonic. Some soldiers wondered if this could be Germany.

Those who knew political geography realized that this was the German-controlled province of Alsace, which with a sister province, Lorraine had been a pawn in Franco-German wars for centuries. The provinces had been awarded to France in 1920 under the Treaty of Versailles, and Germany had agitated for their return since that time. When the Nazi Government chose to reject the treaty, the "unfair" disposition of Alsace and Lorraine was continually emphasized.

With the fall of France in 1940 the Nazis assumed control of the province. La Laye and adjacent towns had been under German rule for more than four years when the 409th Infantry moved in. Signs of Nazi Germany were everywhere.

The wire crew with the 382d Field Artillery liaison officer had laid U. S. Army W-130 wire for communication all the way from the Lubine roadblock to Urbeis. As the doughboys continued their march to La Laye the wire crew extended this line. Distance was so great that they ran out of wire, but with typical American ingenuity wiremen merely spliced into the commercial telephone line which ran alongside the road the troops were following. The 3d Battalion had not much more than arrived at La Laye—there had not yet been a GI phone attached at the end of the wire—when the artillery liaison officer was called to the telephone. He could not understand how someone could be calling him when he had not yet had a telephone installed. The mystery was solved when he was shown to a civilian telephone which was attached to the commercial line the wiremen had just tied into. The wire worked perfectly, too, even though it consisted of over five miles of U. S. Army W-130 wire and three and a half miles of commercial line with a U. S. EE8-A telephone at one end and a commercial telephone at the other.

In addition to the changes in road signs and the Teutonic atmosphere, troops were noticing still another difference in the area. This time the change was topographical rather than political. For the first time in three weeks the march was downhill all the way! Infantrymen were leaving the mountains which many of them had come to hate bitterly. The mountains which camouflaged death with majestic forests, sparkling streams and impressive rock formations were behind them now as the doughboys struck out across the plain to Sélestat.

By pushing through the Vosges Mountains in late November the soldiers of the 409th had done what had been considered impossible by great military strategists down through the ages. War in the Vosges had

been studiously avoided even in the most seasonable weather, and the daring Napoleon had firmly rejected the idea of winter campaigning in those mountains.

When American plans for the late 1944 Vosges attack were revealed to French experts, the French frankly admitted that such a plan was impossible. It was impossible, but these American infantrymen moving out of the mountains across the Sélestat plain had not known of that—so it was accomplished.

A few weeks later doughs of the Regiment read of their part in this epochal campaign in a story published in a four-page supplement to a Sunday edition of the *Beachhead News*, official VI Corps newspaper.

SÉLESTAT: A HARD NUT TO CRACK

November 28 to December 5, 1944

SÉLESTAT: A HARD NUT TO CRACK

After only twenty-four hours in Division reserve, the 409th Infantry received orders on November 27 to change the direction of its attack, head southeast and capture the rather large French city of Sélestat. At 1030 hours that day, the 3d Battalion was ordered to protect the right rear of the Division. L Company was to outpost around Dieffenbach and K Company to outpost southeast of Breitenau. The battalion was to set up antitank guns to cover roadblocks, with I Company remaining in reserve. All of this was in preparation for an expected German counter-attack.

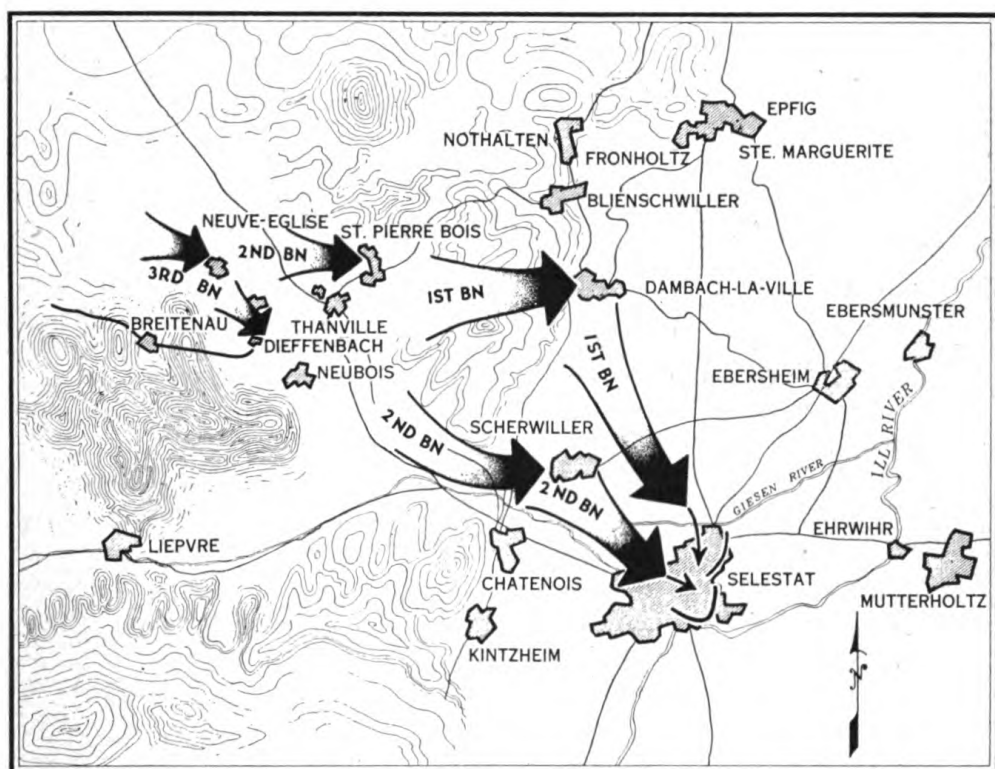
At 1440 hours the 1st Battalion closed in at La Laye. At 1600 hours the 3d Battalion, Company L leading the way, moved to the edge of Dieffenbach and began to place 81mm mortar and artillery fire on observed enemy positions. The attack proper began at 1800 hours and by 1830 part of Dieffenbach had fallen. Positions were outposted and remained static during the night. The battalion commander, Colonel Reynolds, was as anxious as the doughboys to get this phase over with. That night K and L Companies received orders to take the town in the morning.

At 0600 hours November 28, Company I's men left their well concealed positions to attack the town of Neuve-Eglise. Company L meanwhile continued its attack on the remainder of Dieffenbach which was in German hands. Company I took Neuve-Eglise and turned in 51 prisoners of war, including two officers, for the scrap. At 1600 Company I with tanks attached took Hurtzelbach. The 2d Battalion was alerted to the possibility of an armored counterattack toward Triembach from the vicinity of St. Maurice and the battalion moved to the high ground east of the Triembach-St. Maurice road where it could observe from a more favorable position.

On the 29th, I Company moved to Dieffenbach to assist L Company in the final liberation of the town. At 1230 they took up a position at the town's edge while L Company mopped up. By 1400 the town had fallen and was completely in American hands. The 2d Battalion pushed on to St. Pierre which it cleared and occupied by 1845. I Company, minus one of its platoons, was then ordered to Breitenau, where it closed at 2000 hours.

The 1st Battalion attacked Dambach-la-Ville on November 30 and after a day of bitter fighting, the town fell with the exception of a few isolated pockets. By 2400 all of the town had been cleared and roadblocks and outposts established. The road to Sélestat was being cleared!

The month of November came to an end for the 409th Infantry. The men knew what combat was now. They had won victories. For them they had paid with the lives of 36 of their buddies killed in action, 156 slightly



wounded in action, 20 seriously wounded in action, 23 injured in action, 17 missing in action and 4 dead of wounds. With even worse days in the way of casualties and fighting awaiting them in December, the men of the 409th moved bravely into the new month.

On December 1, the campaign to capture Sélestat which had been launched November 27, continued unabated. Operations Instruction No. 18 from the 103d Division specified that the 409th Infantry would attack in its zone and seize the objective which was the city itself. The 410th and 411th Infantry Regiments and Combat Command A of the 14th Armored Division advanced on the 409th's left. On the Regiment's right was the 36th Infantry Division. The 3d Battalion remained at St. Maurice in reserve, ready to move up if the going became too rough.

Attached to the units of the 409th that day was Company B, less two platoons, of the 756th Tank Battalion. The little town of Scherwiller was occupied early in the afternoon and the force moved on. Mist in the zone of operations was heavy, obscuring targets and making artillery missions difficult, if not impossible. The rain of the Vosges Mountains was left behind; the snow and cold of the open plains lay ahead.

A little before midnight, Lt. Colonel Therrell's 1st Battalion advanced as far as the railroad tracks in the northern part of Sélestat. Company B with the 1st Platoon of D Company in support had reached a point on the main road to town at 2200 the previous evening. Small-arms fire was

heard to the front and the bazooka and riflemen of B Company moved up, leaving the rear and flanks of the D Company platoon uncovered. B Company launched an attack across the river, quickly infiltrated, captured and cleared the first six houses and posted security guards at the windows, doors and exteriors. Little did the Company B men realize at that time the catastrophe that was about to overtake their temporary success. Company D followed, one section occupying the first house on the right across the river and another section occupying the building opposite. A machine gun was set up on the window covering the road. Thus far, plans were moving smoothly.

At 0330 hours, three Jerry tanks rumbled down the road and without further warning, opened up at point-blank range on the buildings occupied by troops of B Company, pouring round after round into them. The tanks were the screen for enemy infantry in superior numbers and armed with automatic weapons. The occupants of the first few houses, representing most of B Company, were quickly forced to surrender and were herded away down the road. The attacking Germans then turned their attention to the other buildings. For this expedition, Company B counted 98 men missing in action, 1 killed in action and 2 slightly wounded in action.

Several men of B Company ran out of their billet through the rear door and so close was the enemy upon them that the last man attempting to get away was captured. The others ran into an adjoining building. As the first man entered, a German sprang at him and grabbed his rifle. When more Americans came into the house, the three Germans who were there quickly surrendered. They were disarmed and made to lie down on the floor.

An enemy tank then drew up and fired four rounds into the house. These were followed by four concussion grenades, but all the men remained quiet, believing that if they could hold out until the next morning, A and C Companies would come to their aid. This proved to be true, for at 1000 hours on December 2, T/Sgt. L. G. Allen, of Franklin, Tennessee, came into the house with a patrol from A Company. Sergeant Allen, killed in action the following day, was posthumously awarded the Silver Star. Some of the men joined C Company in the attack while others remained behind to look after the wounded and guard the prisoners.

The men from D Company in the billet on the right side of the road had, in the meantime, also been attacked by two tanks and an unknown number of enemy infantrymen. An attempt to surrender on the part of the Americans was disregarded and met with renewed fire from the enemy. After the Germans ceased firing four of the D Company men and four riflemen



A "good" Jerry.

escaped through a hole in the rear wall made by one of the tank guns. As they were running away from the house they turned and saw the Germans capture the remainder of the men who were attempting to get out. The eight men returned safely to Dambach-la-Ville.

Pfc. Harold F. Bausch, of Lancaster, Wisconsin, Medical Detachment, 1st Battalion, was the B Company aid man the night of the attack. When the enemy tanks first opened up with their deadly fire, he heard someone call for a medic. He attempted to reach the wounded and get them to safety but another blast from the tanks smoked the house and stunned him. When he surrendered he was marched down the street with the rest of the company, but the Germans removed him and an aid man from Company D from the ranks and escorted them back to the house to tend the wounded. The walking wounded were marched along with the rest of the prisoners.

Two guards were placed over the medics. At daylight Bausch sighted American tanks across the stream. He left the other aid man to watch the wounded and escaped to get help. He then returned and remained with the casualties until Sunday morning, December 3, when he helped evacuate them to the battalion aid station. Only 15 of all the men in B Com-



A Jerry ammunition carrier and prime mover overtaken and destroyed by the 409th company who had crossed the river finally managed their escape. A German prisoner of war, a captain, later told intelligence that the American soldiers captured at Sélestat the previous night (men of Company B) were taken to Müttersholtz.

The 2d Battalion reached the outskirts of Sélestat on December 2 and moved over the railroad tracks on the west edge of town. Company B minus two platoons, 756th Tank Battalion, was relieved from its attachment to the 409th and replaced by a single platoon of Company C, 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion. In the early afternoon, permission was received from the Commanding General to use a company of the 48th Tank Battalion in support of the 409th's troops in Sélestat. Our troops encountered stiff resistance in the form of armor, artillery, mortar, automatic weapons and roadblocks that were heavily protected by high concentrations of enemy fire power and troops.

The fight for Sélestat continued with the infantry forced to battle alone during the morning of December 3 because armor could not cross the stream. Tank destroyers entered the town in the afternoon and the 409th Infantry was assigned the task of protecting them from antitank fire.

At 1715 hours with the battle still raging, Task Force Sélestat was created for the specific purpose of capturing Sélestat. It consisted of the 409th Infantry, Company A, 328th Medical Battalion; Company A, 328th Engineer (C) Battalion; Company B, 756th Tank Battalion; Companies B and C, 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion; and Company C, 3d Chemical Battalion. The forces were to function as a tank-infantry combat team. Companies A, C, E and F of the 409th were organized into

assault teams with Company G following the main body at about 400 yards.

Company K was sent to reinforce the 1st Battalion, outpost the rear left flank and patrol between the battalion and a French-Canadian unit when the 410th was relieved. By 1325 hours, Company E reached the railroad line and began to fan out to the south to contact the 36th Infantry Division. By 1645 hours the city was completely taken and occupied. The task force had accomplished its mission.

People in the city were hilariously happy. For the third time in less than a century, they had had the tyrant's yoke lifted. For four years the city had been a German supply and evacuation depot and Jerry didn't want to give the city up without a fight. There were five enemy hospitals in this town. According to the civilians, the town ordinarily had a population of 15,000. It is situated like a pancake on a griddle, a defending machine gunner's or mortarman's dream. Around the town, as an outer defensive ring, the Krauts had deeply dug in machine-gun emplacements. It took a lot of pounding to get them out. The town divulged ponderous six-foot-thick roadblocks, heavily mined and effectively covered by sniper fire.

But all of this was gone now, taken away from the Germans by the 409th and its accompanying forces, "veterans" of less than a month in warfare.

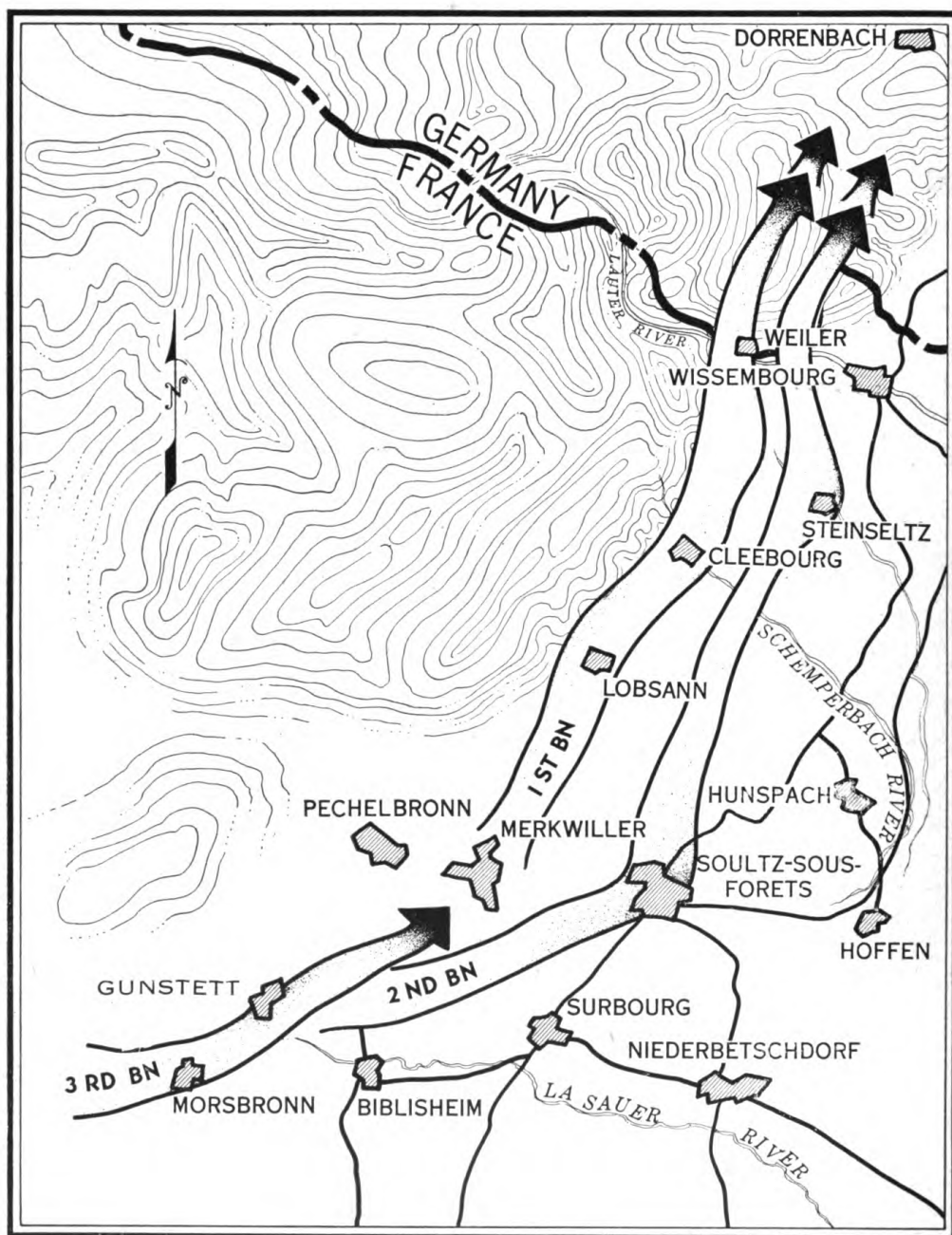
Now it was Sunday and the pealing church bells mingled with the last nerve-shattering sounds of warfare. A tiny girl stood beside the body of a dead Jerry and smiled at the American doughboys. An old woman waved a tattered French flag which she had hidden for four years. She was crying. The people were glad to see the Americans. Though they spoke German, they had no love for Jerry. He took their meat, their milk, their wine, their sons and daughters. In return, he gave them *Ersatz* food to eat, *Ersatz* clothes to wear, and materials manufactured from wood, coal and glass.

One girl told troops that her brother was taken by German soldiers only five days ago and ordered to fight against the Americans coming into the city. A 19-year-old boy related how he hid in a vineyard four days to escape the same fate. A middle-aged woman with tears in her eyes told of her husband who was forced to fight in the German Army. Another told the troops of how the Germans had made plans to take civilians from France to Germany to work in the factories. The labor situation was only one of the Nazis' headaches. But the Americans had come too fast. Yes, it is Sunday in Sélestat. There was war here too, but there is happiness again. The city is once more free.

Elements of the 142d Infantry Regiment on the right effected relief of elements of Task Force Sélestat in accordance with Field Order No. 3. Relief was successfully accomplished that night and control of the area officially passed to the 36th Division on December 5. Task force members were assembled in the vicinity of Scherwiller, Diefenthal and Dambach-la-Ville. The 3d Battalion closed in Truchtersheim. By the end of the day preparations were practically completed for the movement by motor of the remainder of the Regiment's units to the assembly area in the north.

INTO GERMANY—THE ENEMY NATION

December 6–21, 1944



INTO GERMANY—THE ENEMY NATION

The 409th Infantry Regiment moved out early on the morning of December 6. The Regimental CP opened at Reitwiller. The 1st Battalion closed in nearby Truchtersheim and was joined there by the 2d Battalion. Company E was designated to guard the Division CP at Gougenheim and arrived at its area December 7. The 3d Battalion received a spurious order and overlay concerning relief of the 79th Infantry Division, designed as a subterfuge to confuse the enemy. To lend authenticity to the deception a reconnaissance party was dispatched to survey proposed positions. The day was otherwise devoted to firing the bazooka by troops for more complete familiarization with this weapon.

The following day, December 8, found the 409th still in Division reserve. Company B arrived at La Walck to guard the new Division CP. Company E was relieved at noon when the old Division CP closed at Gougenheim. The 2d Battalion moved to Schalkendorf.

Company A left the morning of December 9 for Dauendorf to join Task Force Forest, a unit designed to protect the Division flanks by patrolling the right and left boundaries and maintaining contact with the 45th and 79th Divisions. For the remainder of the day and all of the next the Regiment jockeyed to new locations preparatory to taking up its assigned positions on the line.

The 11th saw the Regiment, less the 1st Battalion which was in Division reserve, move into its assembly area in the vicinity of Forstheim, preparing to pass through the 410th Infantry and take its place in the division zone between the other two regiments after the 410th Infantry had taken Laubach.

The 409th was then to press the attack in its own middle sector. The immediate objective after commitment was the town of Morsbronn-les-Bains from where the Regiment was to forge its way beyond the town and prepare to continue the attack on Division order. Attached to the 409th for the operation were one platoon of Company B, 756th Tank Battalion, and Company B, less one platoon, of the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Towed). The 382d Field Artillery Battalion, initially in support of the Division, was to provide direct support for the 409th when the attack started.

Regimental CP arrived at Mertzwiller at 1100 hours. At noon the 3d Battalion moved into the gap between the 410th and 411th Infantry Regiments and at approximately 1330 hours it entered Morsbronn without resistance. By darkness the battalion commanded the heights above the river west of Gunstett.

I Company crossed the La Sauer River under the cover of darkness, meeting stiff resistance from enemy mortars and machine guns but succeeding in establishing a bridgehead and taking part of the town. Mean-



Soultz, after being taken by the 2d Battalion.

while, the 1st Battalion had reverted to Regimental control from Division reserve on December 12 and moved to the vicinity of Gunstett. Orders were issued shifting the 2d Battalion into the right half of the 409th's zone. The two battalions would then advance abreast, the 2d on the south. The 3d Battalion took Merkwiller and Pechelbronn, two small Alsatian towns, and dug in for the night. The 2d Battalion captured Kutzenhausen and also dug in for the night.

The 13th saw the 14th Armored Division on the right flank of the Regiment. The 3d Battalion of the 409th Infantry was relieved by the 2d Battalion and the 3d reverted to Regimental reserve. At that time the mission of the 409th and attached Company B, 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion, was to attack at 0830 and seize Soultz and the road leading northwest from the town. The 2d Battalion, with the 2d Platoon, Company B, 756th Tank Battalion attached, was handed the assignment. The units were briefed to remain prepared for attack at any time. The 14th Armored Division might take Soultz, but the 2d Battalion was not to wait for this action to occur.

It was to take the initiative, push on to its objective and especially watch the southern and eastern flanks from which strong German opposition could develop. The 1st and 2d Battalions spearheaded the attack, the 1st taking Lobsann and Memelshoffen and the latter taking Soultz and Reschwiller. American doughboys were surprised to find the much-heralded Maginot forts undefended.

The assignment received by the 409th on December 14 was to continue

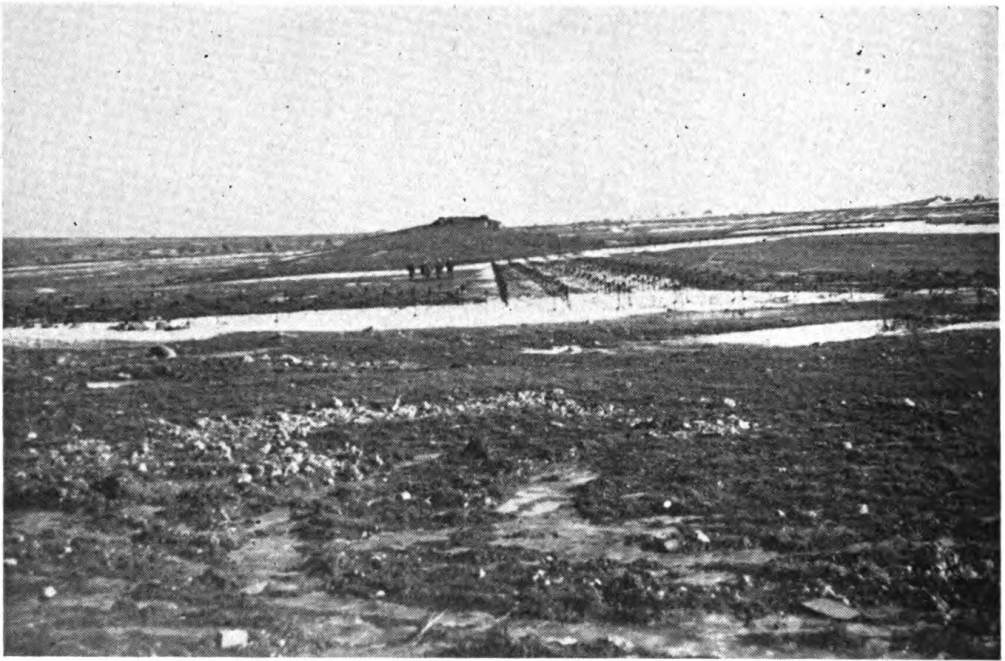
the attack and protect the Division right flank on the north. Company A of the 47th Tank Battalion relieved the Regiment's attached Company B, 756th Tank Battalion at a road junction near the scene of the jump-off. The 2d Battalion pushed off at 0730 and took Bremmelbach before noon. Companies A and C took Drachenbronn. The 1st Battalion entered Cleebourg without opposition at 1438. Thus far all was going well. The two battalions were ordered to consolidate. Permission was requested of the Commanding General and granted to extend the Regiment's zone to include Steinseltz and Oberhoffen the following morning. The Regiment was ordered to return to its original zone after clearing these towns.

The 1st and 2d Battalions were instructed to lean toward the Regiment's left boundary and entirely miss the city of Wissembourg which was the principal objective of the 14th Armored Division. G Company with five tanks in support jumped off to seize the town of Steinseltz while E Company prepared to support the attack.

A runner was sent out to stop the church bell in Steinseltz from ringing because it had been learned that this was a signal for the enemy artillery to zero in. The tanks entered the town at 0922 with Company G close behind. They moved through the town with no opposition and Oberhoffen was taken shortly afterward. G Company was left in the towns to protect the Regiment's flanks and the remainder of the battalion swung northward to participate in the main regimental effort on the town of Rott which had been occupying the attention of 1st Battalion since its jump-off at 0750 the morning of December 17. After furious fighting, Rott was taken by B Company assisted by A Company. The 3d Battalion, with the exception of K Company which had been committed to patrol the Regiment's left boundary and act as contact liaison between the 411th and 409th's 1st Battalion, remained in Cleebourg as regimental reserve.

The following day, December 16, the 1st and 2d Battalions renewed their attack, capturing Weiler. They reached their objective beyond the town shortly before dark. The 1st Battalion pushed on to Hill 503 to enter German territory for the first time that same afternoon at Germanhoff.

The 17th saw much patrol activity. Patrols were sent forward to probe the Siegfried defenses as far as they could safely reconnoiter. Vigorous patrolling of the areas in front of the regimental lines was ordered. Here it was : Germany—the enemy nation. This was the moment the men of the Cactus Division's 409th Infantry Regiment had been waiting for since they first went into combat. Intelligence eagerly awaited the return of the patrols and reports were entered on the regimental maps as they came in. The Regiment did not attack that day because it was told that its units were too far in front of the Seventh Army front.



Maginot fortifications in the vicinity of Cleebourg.

The Regiment, however, was ordered to attack on December 18. The forward CP was moved to Rechtenbach, Germany, and the town was found empty of civilians. Evidence was visible everywhere that the departure of its citizens had been hasty. No personal belongings or furniture had been taken and some homes still contained warm meals which had been prepared but never eaten.

The 1st Battalion was unable to jump off on time due to artillery fire on its left front. Its right company was waiting for a patrol to return. The 2d Battalion started across the valley at 1145 encountering no opposition. It was unable to determine whether pillboxes were manned, although some unoccupied bunkers were passed. Information was received that Combat Command A of the 14th Armored Division, which had been disorganized by heavy German opposition, was withdrawing from Ober-Otterbach and making preparations to re-form. The possibility of using the reserve battalion to protect the Regiment's right flank, left open by this action, was considered. Company C, meanwhile, took Hill 89 which overlooked the city of Ober-Otterbach on the west and included three concrete bunkers, one on top of the hill and two on the slopes protecting it. The bunkers were reinforced with steel and connected by tunnels.

The objective for the 19th remained the same. Company A secured a position just northeast of Hill 543 while Company B maneuvered to a position on Hill 489 to the left of Company C. The units sustained a counterattack from what was initially estimated to be a German battalion but it was repulsed without loss. E Company strengthened its positions on

Hohenberg Hill, finally moving into a saddle between it and Grassberg Hill. I Company protected the right flank of the Regiment due to the withdrawal of Combat Command A for reorganization.

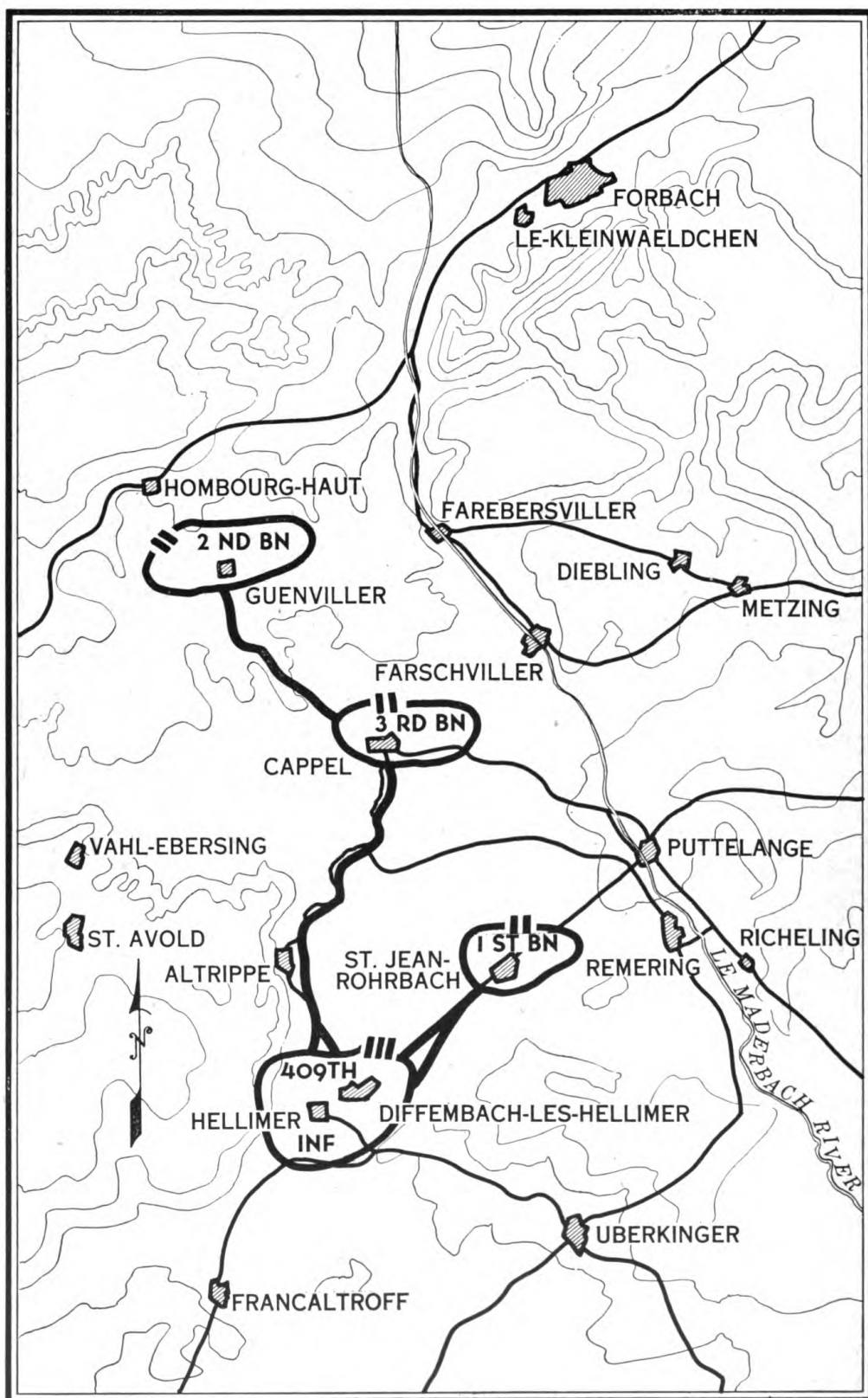
Three officers and a platoon from E Company entered a pillbox that, unknown to them, still contained a German soldier. The enemy soldier quickly moved outside and slammed the steel bunker door, locking them in. The enemy had a machine gun outside the pillbox and another platoon had to wipe out this nest in order to release the doughboys. Companies B and G approached pillboxes and by the use of TNT in the embrasures blew them up. All along the front that day, the story was the same. German defenses which took months to build were entered in a matter of minutes.

The weather on December 20 was misty and visibility was reduced to a minimum. The 1st and 2d Battalions continued to secure their positions. Low clouds made air support in the sector impossible. Occasional snow fell. The enemy launched several tank-supported counterattacks during the morning and afternoon but all were repulsed. Heavy artillery and mortar fire was poured into the 409th's lines. It was discovered that the enemy with great resourcefulness was reoccupying some of the trenches the 409th had abandoned under shell fire.

The Regiment was ordered to continue its aggressive reconnaissance by fire on the 21st using all weapons, to conduct patrolling without any involvement in a heavy attack, and to fire on, but not assault, pillboxes. At 0200 a stubborn attack was directed against Companies B and C by the enemy using flame throwers and Molotov cocktails. The besieged companies consolidated their strength for a perimeter defense and successfully repulsed the threat, the enemy withdrawing at about 0330. Both battalions called for harassing fire during the early hours of the night with special concentrations on Bollenborn and Dorrenbach.

In the unit journal for December 21 is the terse notation: "CO A is doing a superior job." That notation should describe the contribution of every company on the line during this bitter Siegfried siege. Cactus troops were so close to enemy positions it often was impossible to use artillery on the bunkers and pillboxes lest the Americans be endangered by their own fire. The enemy was reluctant to leave his position in the "impregnable" line. He continued his efforts to regain lost ground.

During the night German activity was as vicious as it had been throughout the daylight attack. 1st Battalion units again repulsed the assaults. The men had not slept in days yet they knew that with the advent of morning the attack into Germany would be pressed forward again. B Company asked for reinforcements from K Company.



Morning brought not reinforcements but relief for the entire Regiment. Units of the veteran 45th Infantry Division took over during the early daylight hours. This unexpected appearance of the Thunderbirds was definitely an advance Christmas present for the battered doughs of the 409th.

By mid-afternoon all companies had closed into the area near Wissembourg. Clean clothing was issued to most companies and soldiers took advantage of the respite to rest tired bodies and quiet raw nerves. The session just ended had been the Regiment's toughest test by fire.

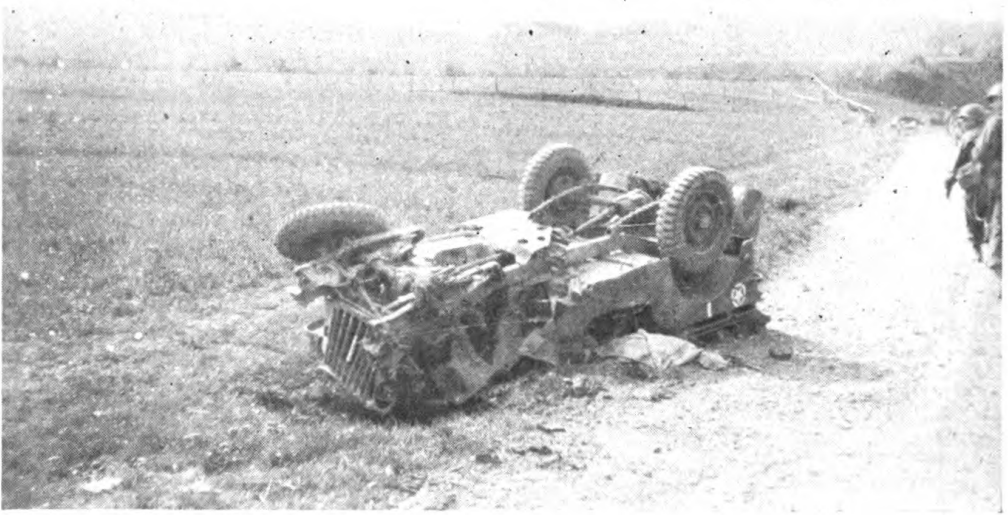
A night motor march was made utilizing Seventh Army vehicles and Service Company trucks, and all companies were billeted in the vicinity of Hellimer, France, on December 23. We had moved north from Alsace to its twin province of Lorraine. Medics busily administered to men who had not had time to be concerned with illnesses and minor injuries during the past week. Services were conducted by battalion chaplains.

Another movement was made on the 24th. The battalions went this time to the vicinity of Guenviller and Cappel, France, just opposite the rich Saar basin in Germany.

Christmas Day exceeded expectations of even the most optimistic. The turkey which had been so elusive at Thanksgiving time was finally captured by the aggressive cooks. The feathered prisoner was prepared and distributed with the customary accessories: cranberry sauce, celery, mashed and sweet potatoes, giblet gravy, mince and pumpkin pie and coffee. A further holiday note was added with the distribution of beer and cigars. Mail clerks returned from the APO heavily laden with sacks that held accumulated letters and the eagerly awaited Christmas packages. In an effort to further the Christmas spirit at least one attempt was made to concoct a Tom-and-Jerry with *Schnapps* as the alcoholic ingredient. Whether the experiment was a success or not depended on the individual taste.

Everything that made Christmas at home such a joyful holiday was present in the battered French towns except, of course, home itself and the loved ones who were so important. Presence of small Christmas trees in almost every French home delighted and surprised the American soldiers. It was learned that the legend of Kris Kringle, or Santa Claus as Americans know the old man, had begun in this very locality that the soldiers of the 409th were occupying during the holiday season.

With holiday celebration confined to just one day the men turned their thoughts on the 26th to the "why" of their presence in Lorraine. The Regiment seemed to be in a quiet sector and that in itself was a new experience. Disquieting rumors of a German attack in great numbers had



A 409th four-by-four that hit a mine.

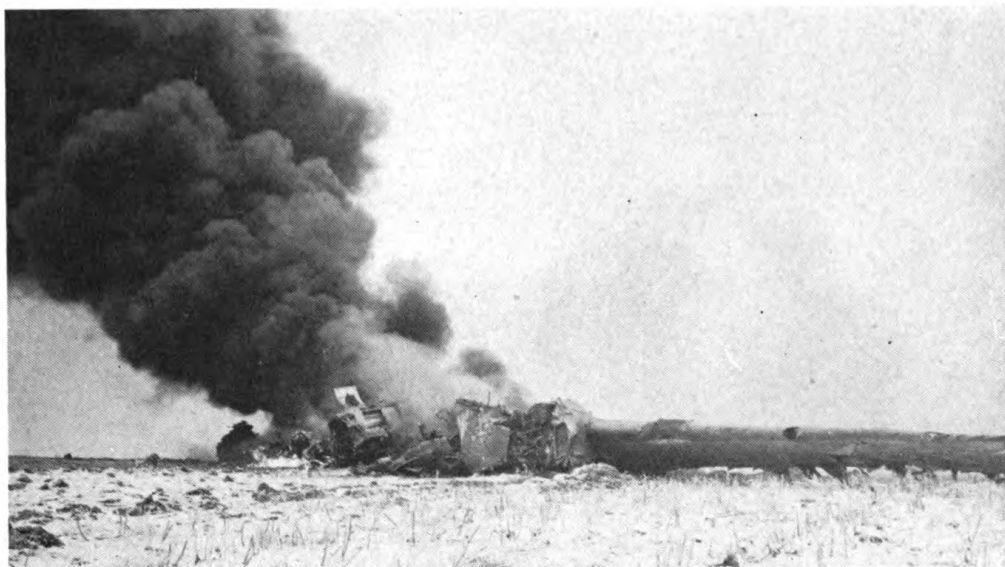
been circulated during the fighting in the Siegfried zone, but these rumors had been dismissed as "impossible." German prisoners had boasted that the Wehrmacht had already launched a mighty counteroffensive employing armor, planes, artillery and airborne troops.

Headlines in *Stars and Stripes* reassured the men that the rumors were indeed true. A week-old push in the Ardennes salient directed by German Field Marshal Von Rundstedt was being challenged by the American First and Third Armies as the 409th moved back into France. Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's swift Third Army had moved north in an effort to cut across the waist of the German salient which had come to be known as "The Bulge." This displacement of Third Army troops made it necessary for the Seventh Army to displace its own troops and to extend its line to a distance of 103 miles. Movement northward of the 103d Division was part of the extension plan.

The Cactusmen were moved to the Sarreguemines sector, part of the rich Saar basin. The area had formerly been held by the 6th Armored Division.

From the 25th until the end of the month preparations were made to defend the regimental zone should a German counterattack come in this sector. Reconnaissance was conducted for positions and plans were submitted for defensive fires. Antitank guns were placed in position, rear positions were reconnoitered and gun emplacements were dug.

Such activity put the men on what seemed to be a "working day" basis. Troops would leave for work in the morning, dig and improve positions during the day and return in time for supper. It was a welcome interlude after over a month of fighting.



A B-24 bomber which crashed in flames near Hellimer after its crew parachuted to safety. Engine trouble caused the crash. The crew was brought to the 2d Battalion CP. One member of the crew had to be lifted out of a tree.

Plans were submitted to the Division Engineer for necessary road-blocks and bridge demolitions. Work progressed rapidly on the establishment of defensive lines. Commanding officers and their staffs were oriented on counterattack plans and ground missions. By the 27th approximately 50 per cent of the work was completed. Another 25 per cent was added on the 28th. Cannon, C and Antitank Companies' positions were completed on the 29th.

Battalions and separate companies were placed on an alert status beginning at 0500 hours on December 30. Work on defensive lines was suspended until further notice. The alert ended at 0900 hours and work was resumed. Guards were assigned to 27 bridges in the vicinity.

At the end of the month, 80 per cent of the necessary tactical work was completed. Positions were almost finished and the Regiment settled down to the prospect of a hitherto unassigned mission—a holding action.

The month of December saw casualties totaling 589 men in the 409th Regiment. Forty-six men were killed in action and 218 were counted as missing in action. Eight were seriously injured. Two hundred and fifty-four were slightly wounded in action while 56 were slightly injured. Six died of wounds.

While the fiercest battle of the war was being waged to the north, men of the 409th were living a life of comparative ease. After the defensive positions had been completed there was little to do during the first two weeks of January.

On January 2, an act of bravery took place which brought the award of one of the three Soldier's Medals awarded in the Regiment during the



Men of the 1st Platoon, Company H, digging a machine-gun emplacement near Merlbach, France.

hostilities in Europe. Hero of the event was Pfc. Ardell G. Campbell, of Richmond, Virginia. While one of Private Campbell's buddies was cleaning immersion heaters, a bucket of gasoline which the man was carrying became ignited. As the flames reached the soldier's hands, he dropped the bucket which caused the flaming gasoline to splash upon and ignite his clothing. Seeing his comrade's plight, Private Campbell called to him to roll on the ground, but the man, confused and in great pain, failed to hear the call and began to run. Private Campbell, cognizant of the inherent danger of the situation, ran after his comrade, overtook him, and brought him to earth with a flying tackle. With great presence of mind, he rolled the man over and over in the snow, using his own body to smother the flames, and pulled off the smouldering clothing. As a result of Private Campbell's action, the life of his comrade was saved.

In the north, the Ardennes Bulge was being gradually whittled by the armies of Generals Hodges and Patton and Field Marshal Montgomery. There was no doubt now that the German threat to Paris and the northern channel ports had been contained. With a heavy concentration of troops in the north, the Wehrmacht did not choose to attack in the Sarreguemines sector. Though he did not actively engage our forces the enemy at-



Street scenes in Cappel.

tempted to harass the Regiment. Companies were continually alerted to reports of German parachute landings in the area. It was during this period that German intelligence was using American matériel, captured from our forces, in an effort to confuse our defenses. Captured jeeps



Engineers work to complete a minefield in a secondary defensive position.



In Cappel. *Left to right*: Lieutenant Jennings, 3d Battalion S-2; Lt. Col. Burkitt A. Reynolds, 3d Battalion commander; Capt. Joseph Bell, Company K commander.

were operated by Nazi soldiers dressed in American uniforms who attempted to learn our password. None of these vehicles was apprehended in our regimental zone, although the guards were continually on the lookout for them. During this period the situation in the mail line was the principal cause of concern among the men. Because of the strain on supply forces, busy rushing men and equipment to the north, mail call in the Regiment came very seldom.

On the morning of January 14, the regimental positions were taken over by elements of the 36th Infantry Division. The 409th entrucked for another assignment in its former area in Alsace. Because the Germans were pressing another vigorous threat, this time against Alsace, it was necessary for the Seventh Army to draw troops back into the sector near the German border towns. The 409th relieved infantry troops of the 70th Infantry Division near Lamperstock, France. New to combat, the 70th had been hit hard in the German attack that culminated in the recapture of Bitche.

This new line was held for six days with little incident. The 409th's patrols in platoon strength hit the enemy continually, but there was no clash of forces in large numbers.

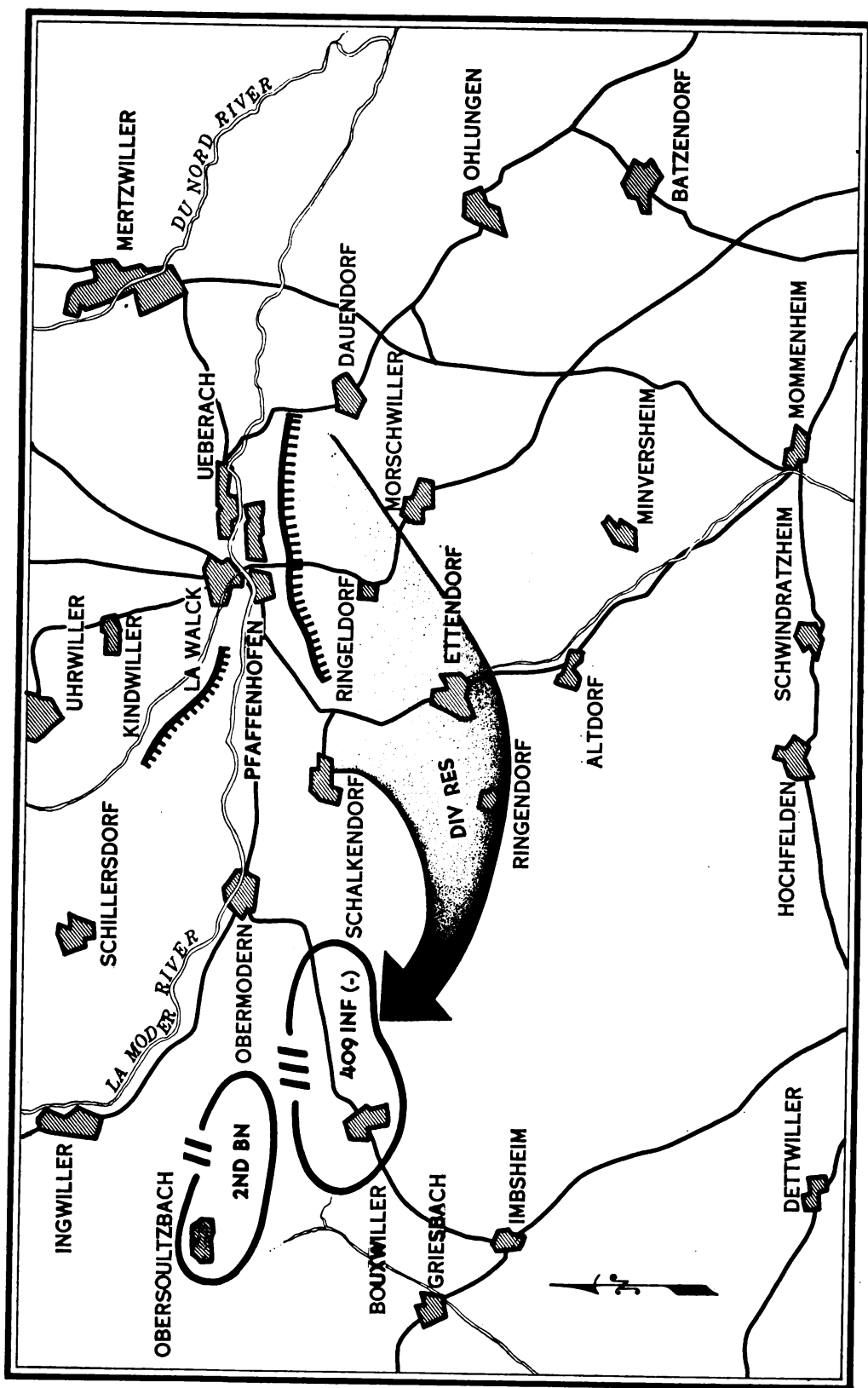
With another revision in plans, the Regiment withdrew again, this time south of Alsace proper. This withdrawal was made in the face of an enemy threat against the entire Corps sector.

Movement of the troops was made under extremely difficult conditions beginning at 1400 hours on the 20th and continuing under the cover of darkness. A covering force comprising L and G Companies with attached units supported the withdrawal from previously reconnoitered positions but experienced no contact with the enemy. Because vehicles

could not be obtained for the march, troops of the Regiment were forced to make the difficult withdrawal in the traditional manner of the infantry—on foot.

The icy roads caused the heavily burdened troops to fall time and again. Narrow roads and heavy traffic also imperiled the foot soldiers. Major Charles Porteous, Regimental Supply Officer, was faced with the responsibility of quickly moving a regiment's supplies. Assisted closely and with complete coordination by Capt. Fred Gerken, Regimental Munitions Officer, he and his men performed the job without material loss. In the face of these trying conditions the Regiment closed into Ringeldorf during the morning of the 21st, after a strenuous 16-hour march. It is a tribute to the courage and discipline of the men of the 409th that only a very small number failed to complete the march.

HOLDING ACTION
January 22 to March 12, 1945



HOLDING ACTION

All was quiet on the Seventh Army front today. Patrols were active and there were occasional exchanges of artillery.—NEWS ITEM.

To the casual newspaper reader during those late days of January, the front in which the 409th Infantry Regiment was situated seemed asleep. But a glance at the official journals during those last two weeks of the first month of 1945 showed things to be quite different.

Digging of the Regiment's new outpost line below the little village of Mietesheim had begun under the cover of darkness the night of the move into the area. A while later digging of the new main line of resistance below Kindwiller, La Walck and Ueberach was started. Regimental CP was located at Ringeldorf.

The doughboys ran into so many refugees on the roads that it was necessary to set up five control points at exits to the village of Pfaffenhofen and hold the refugees in the town so that they would not interfere with military operations. The Civil Affairs Officer of the town was notified of the five roadblocks and asked to check them periodically.

So close was the 409th's line to German installations that on January 23 a patrol from I Company not far in front of the lines made contact with a five-man German patrol, the men of which were in dark uniform to aid their camouflage. No firing was exchanged. Colonel Lloyd, Regimental Commander, ordered that digging of foxholes and preparation of other installations be continued to completion as rapidly as possible.

The Army Air Forces were active in that region too. A fighter-bomber mission was made on a concentration of two companies of German troops during the morning one day and later air reconnaissance showed 800 enemy troops moving westward on a road from Eschbach to Mertzwiller.

During all of these so-called dull, routine days, patrols from regimental companies were active with orders from Intelligence to get as many enemy prisoners as possible. Officers were attempting by interrogation of these prisoners to get the exact German strength and plans for future enemy operations. F Company seized two Jerries who said they were advance scouts for an attack on Pfaffenhofen and La Walck.

Later that day I Company was hit by an attack and was forced to withdraw to Ueberach, capturing three prisoners in the fight. The main line of resistance was revised to run north of Ueberach and K Company was withdrawn to reshape the line.

A group of engineers then headed for the village of La Walck to blow the last remaining bridge, but orders changed at the last minute because a platoon from F Company was found to be still in the village. F Company was given permission to blow the bridge when it became necessary.

The 2d Battalion asked permission to use tank destroyer guns to knock



Ringendorf: A typical scene after a snowfall.

out the church steeple in Bitschhofen so that it could not be used as an enemy observation post. The plan was approved by Major Julius J. Urban, of Jackson Heights, New York, who ordered that the gun be used from a position where German artillery counterfire would not endanger surrounding troops. The plan was called off later on in the day when reconnaissance of the 2d Battalion indicated that the church steeple could not be seen because of poor visibility.

The following day the spasmodic tussles with Jerry continued. K Company withdrew one of its outposts from the woods but only after an estimated 35 Germans had paid with their lives for the small victory. In this skirmish, Sgt. Elvis Wallis, of Muskogee, Oklahoma, was credited with killing or wounding seven Germans. In Intelligence, meantime, piecemeal stories obtained from prisoners were being put together to form the entire situation on German strength. One prisoner reported he was from the 13th Howitzer Company, 47th Infantry, and that there were 80 to 100 men in his company. Another reported that the 47th had two regiments, 15 tanks and two 210mm mortars.

Action began popping on January 25th. The enemy attacked in the vicinity of the village of Kindwiller and momentarily endangered all of the 409th's positions. At the time, E Company had a patrol of 19 men in the village and concern began to be felt for them. The patrol was under the command of Lt. Richard W. Ellison, of Camby, Massachusetts. 2d Battalion headquarters later reported that the patrol had undoubtedly



Left: Lieut. A. H. B. Jeffords, 409th Infantry liaison officer to Division Headquarters.
Right: Capt. J. D. White, company commander and Lieut. Ralph Scoppa (*center*), both of Cannon Company.

been cut off and captured. Eight men who returned from a similar patrol reported that they were attacked by 200 men and tanks and automatic weapons but the men managed to escape to American lines.

Early in the morning hours of January 26 a new experiment was tried by the Regiment. Major Samuel B. Yow, of Athens, Georgia, 3d Battalion executive officer, called for artificial moonlight on a certain sector of the front. The lights had been set up but were ineffective that night because of a snowstorm. Equipment was held, however, for another experiment later. Orders went down from Regiment that day to dispatch three patrols to pick up prisoners to determine the enemy situation.

About the same time that the outposts and front-line troops were having their troubles, the behind-the-line men were having their difficulties too. An Intelligence and Reconnaissance jeep hit a mine at Pfaffenhofen and one of the men, Pfc. Muton B. Martin, of College Station, Texas, was badly injured. The jeep was totally demolished.

The same afternoon saw more trouble. Army Air Forces planes opened a large bombing and strafing attack on enemy installations in Uhrwiller and received enemy gunfire in return over Kindwiller. Many of the planes missed the correct target, however, and U. S. positions in the vicinity of the Moder River received hits. A liaison officer was notified to immediately direct the planes northward. A large fire was observed in Uhrwiller as the attack was completed.

Meanwhile, troops of the 409th were continually busy improving their positions as they defended them. All of this was accomplished with the idea that if Jerry had any intention of coming over on the American side



Maj. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, who assumed command of the 103d Infantry Division in January 1945.

of the river, he would be effectively repulsed. Mines and wire obstacles were placed in front of the main line of resistance. The antitank and cannon units camouflaged and thoroughly entrenched their guns. Finally artificial lights were used in the area, being adjusted by the 2d Battalion.

The 328th Engineer Battalion's Company A had its hands full. They assisted day and night in the construction of positions and on January 28 and 29 constructed footbridges for use of patrols who were crossing the Moder River into enemy-held territory.

On January 31, in accordance with a plan for the readjustment of forces and sectors as directed in Division operations instructions, the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division was oriented on positions of the 3d Battalion which occupied the Division right boundary. The 101st was accepting its first assignment following its famous stand at Bastogne when it was cut off by the Ardennes salient breakthrough. It was there that Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, then commanding the Screaming Eagle Division, issued his famous reply of "Nuts!" to a German ultimatum for surrender. Later General McAuliffe was given command of the 103d Infantry Division and promoted to major general.

Relief by the 101st was started at 1830 hours on the 31st and command of the sector passed at 2024 hours. The month ended with the 1st Battalion remaining the only battalion on the regimental line in the reduced Division zone.

With little combat action in January, the 409th's casualty list was reduced considerably over the two previous months with a total of 117 men. Of these, 21 were killed in action, 1 died of wounds, 29 were counted as missing, 32 were slightly injured in action and 34 were slightly wounded in action.

With the exception of a raid on Kindwiller on February 8, the next month saw practically no combat action by the 409th. Patrols were active during most of the month, defensive positions were continually improved and training was conducted for the constantly rotated reserve battalion. Orientation was provided on the flame thrower and men were familiarized with the appearance of the new M4A3 tank.

During the last quarter of the month, the Regiment was placed in Division reserve and it was then that the recreation staff under the direction of T/5 Gosden went to great lengths to see that the men were well entertained. The men were quartered in small French towns in the vicinity of Bouxwiller and a daily eight-hour training schedule was maintained.

But for combat the raid on Kindwiller on February 8 provided the only excitement. A previously attempted raid on February 4 had been unsuccessful as the Germans had been alerted and the force had been unable to enter the town. But this time, the men were determined it would be successful. Here's how it went:

At 0050 hours on February 8, Capt. Roger H. Craddock, of Winnsboro, Texas, commanding Company G, checked in at the 1st Battalion outpost with the battalion S-2 and was given information on the situation obtained from four prisoners captured an hour earlier. The company passed through the outpost at 0100 following a route along the north



Scenes in the 409th Infantry's sector, in the vicinity of Bueswiller and Ringendorf.

bank of the Moder River to the west. The trail had been reconnoitered from the air the day before by Captain Craddock. For communications, he was provided with an SCR-300 radio set which maintained contact with La Walck.

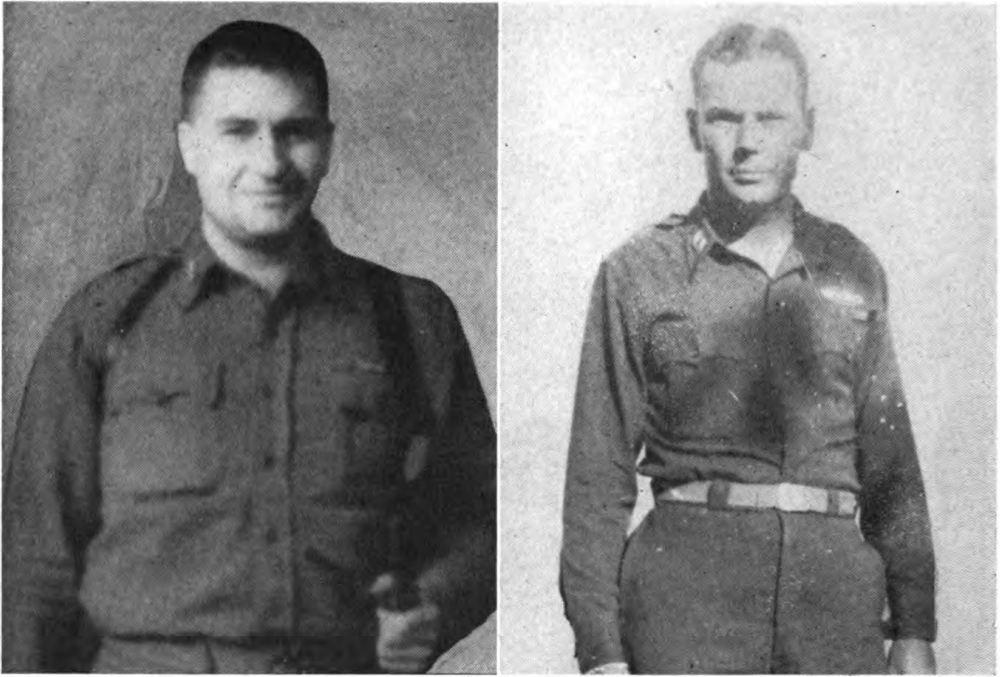
At 0140 Captain Craddock reported he was changing direction to the north to approach Kindwiller on a previously planned line of march. Due to the dense vineyards, the patrol's progress was slow and even by 0210 the men had had no contact with the enemy. At 0225 when the company was about 300 yards south of Kindwiller, one round of artillery was called for to mark the west end of town and sixteen minutes later another round of artillery was called for to mark the east end of town. At this time, the company was 150 yards south of its objective and platoons were moving into position for the attack. At 0310 hours, when the company was 50 yards from Kindwiller, enemy machine guns opened up. The two assault platoons which were armed almost exclusively with sub-machine guns and Browning automatic rifles returned the fire immediately.

Captain Craddock called for artillery concentrations and requested that artificial moonlight be turned on the town. Three platoons entered the town, one assault platoon probing the streets to the east and the other clearing the buildings on the south side. The fourth platoon remained in support about 75 yards south of town to be prepared to gather prisoners. By 0321 seven prisoners had been taken and turned over to the supporting platoon. At the same time Captain Craddock ordered the artificial moonlight extinguished and a minute later a green parachute flare which was the prearranged signal for withdrawal, was fired. At 0330 artillery and cannon fire was ordered held for five minutes after which all concentrations were ordered fired to cover the withdrawal.

The first returning elements reached La Walck at 0410, the remainder of the company arriving at 0530. During the period of withdrawal, litters were used to evacuate casualties which were carried across the bridge to Pfaffenhofen and there placed in medical aid jeeps.

Result of the raid: nine prisoners taken, three machine guns and an unknown number of machine pistols silenced by hand grenades; number of enemy dead unknown. Casualties sustained by G Company were 1 killed, 6 missing and 18 wounded, including two officers, Lt. Edgar F. Hall, of Indianapolis, Indiana, and Lt. John C. Ebel, of St. Louis, Missouri. Of the wounded, four were returned to duty immediately.

At a battalion inspection and review at 1400 hours that day, General McAuliffe, commanding the 103d Infantry Division presented the Bronze Star Medal to the following men for their heroism during the raid:



Major Charles E. Porteous (*left*), Regimental S-4 and Capt. Roger H. Craddock (*right*), commander of Company G.

Captain Craddock, Lieutenant Hennecke, S/Sgt. Ludovic P. Cogozzo, of Chicago, Illinois, and Pvt. Earl E. Sprague, of Machias, Maine.

On February 18, as the Cactus Division was celebrating the completion of its first 100 days in combat, Regimental CP was moved from Ringeldorf, where it had been located for nearly a month, to Bouxwiller.

There, entertainment for the officers and enlisted men continued. Two taprooms were opened in the town and motion pictures were exhibited in the town's theater. One of the taprooms was christened "Abe and Pappy's" after a Dallas, Texas, café the men used to frequent. The other was called "Leon and Eddie's" after a New York night club they would have liked to frequent. The rooms were open daily from 1000 to 2100, offering beer, magazines and writing paper and after 1400 providing entertainment recruited from the ranks in the form of a band, accordion and piano solos, novelty acts and vocals. The regimental band, whose complement had depleted in combat, performed well, although Corporal Gosden constantly lamented the lack of a trombonist and asked the Regimental Sergeant Major, M/Sgt. Jerrold Adler, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to carefully screen the Form 20s of reinforcements and divert one to his use.

The movie house in Bouxwiller, completely staffed by members of the 34th Special Service Company and equipped with their projection facilities, gave six showings a day. Recorded music was played between per-



Scenes in Bouxwiller after a supply of antitank mines exploded in an engineer dump.

formances. Some of the films shown during the period were "Song of Bernadette," "Home in Indiana," and "The Doughgirls." A soldier show, "Laff it Off," was featured in the two cafés until February 23 and was well received by the men. Following that, the 34th Special Service Company staged "Stars Without Garters" on the night of the 25th and for the next two days. The Division Band was occasionally pressed into service to bolster the entertainment.

The 1st and 3d Battalions, Antitank, Headquarters and Cannon Companies of the Regiment and attached units of the 328th Engineer Combat Battalion, also stationed in Bouxwiller, availed themselves of the entertainment facilities offered.

The 2d Battalion in Obersoultzbach was alternately shuttled to Bouxwiller and provided with movies through the instrumentality of the Regiment's own generator and projector on those rare occasions when the latter was out of repair. Corporal Gosden ventured to offer statistics to support his contention that the Regiment's projector had been in repair longer and more often than any other projector in any Army in the world.

While they were waiting in reserve for the inevitable attack they knew was coming, the Regiment had quite a number of laugh boosters, one coming when Lt. Harold M. Branton, of Shongaloo, Louisiana, G Company, gave Alsations a little down-on-the-farm demonstration.

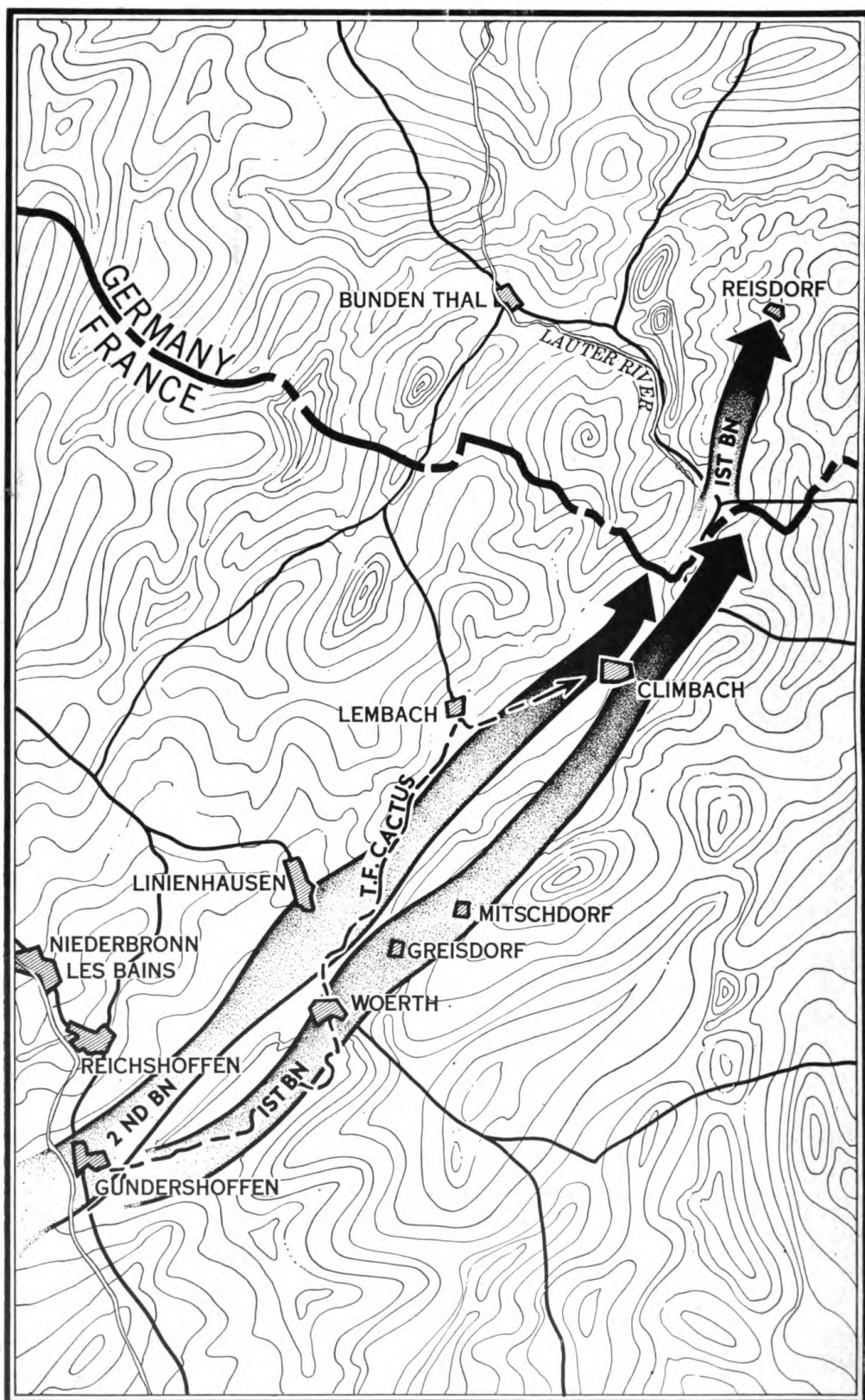
It seems one evening just as G Company was called out for chow, most of the village's population came around the corner in pursuit of a large white hog. Finally, the civilians cornered the fugitive, only to have the porker make a mad rush for the open.

At this point, Lieutenant Branton, who is no mean hog-caller himself, intervened and told the civilians that their method of approach was all wrong. Seeing that they neither understood nor appreciated his direction,

which was delivered in his drawling bayou accent, and that the hog was becoming quite frenzied, he shouldered his way through the crowd and with a quick, sweeping movement, snared the offender by both ears. Amid the applause of the astonished civilians, Lieutenant Branton half-dragged, half-carried the squealing culprit to its pen.

Training and entertainment continued during the first two weeks of March and as each day passed, the men knew that they were another day closer to the inevitable attack which was necessary if they were to regain the land they had been forced to leave, push on through the Siegfried defenses into Germany and reach the Rhine River.

THROUGH THE DRAGON'S TEETH
March 13–31, 1945



THROUGH THE DRAGON'S TEETH

"I at last saw the infantryman use his weapons by smothering the target area with fire from both the prone and marching positions. This paid huge dividends in the saving of lives and by rendering the opposition helpless. We have at last in this Regiment made use of musketry. I have long known that a volume of fire would render the opposition helpless to his weapons. Prior to this the infantryman of this Regiment relied on artillery and weapons of that type to blast him forward."

In those words the Regimental Commander, Col. Claudius L. Lloyd, framed his critique for the month of March. In those same few words the story of the second assault against the intricate Siegfried Line positions is told.

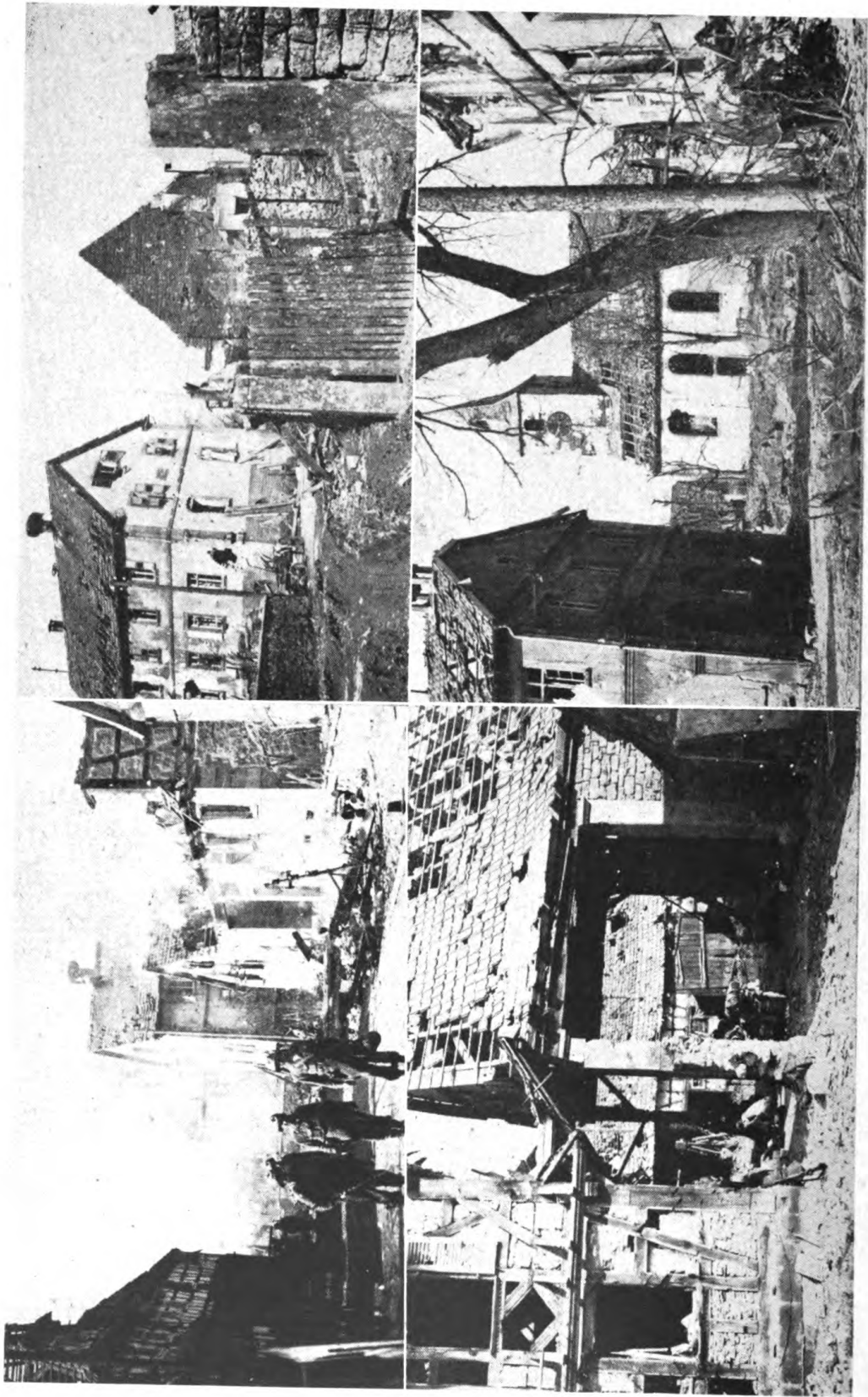
"We have at last in this Regiment made use of musketry." Those eleven words acknowledge the fact that soldiers of the 409th had uncovered the potentialities of their weapons. Against the background of those eleven words the former members of the Regiment should still be able to hear the never-ending chatter of relentless marching fire.

As the middle of March approached, men of the 409th realized that the day for the push back into Germany was coming nearer. The First and Ninth Armies had opened powerful offensives and the Third Army had begun to push through the rich Saar basin. Surely, it was concluded, the Seventh Army would launch a final assault into Alsace soon.

Suspense was high when on March 12 Regimental Headquarters issued an alert for the beginning of a new offensive. The order was disclosed in a meeting of battalion commanders and all pertinent information was labeled "top secret." Only a few officers knew that the Corps objective was to uncover and relentlessly penetrate the Siegfried Line upon which success the attack would continue indefinitely to the northeast.

At 1115 hours on March 14 the battalion commanders gave this knowledge to their company commanders and special staffs. The information remained top secret. The important plans included these: H-hour, D-day—0900, March 15. The 410th and 411th Infantry Regiments would launch a coordinated attack on their fronts seizing the ground along the Zintzell River which would be Phase Line B. At this point the 3d Battalion of the 409th Infantry would create a Task Force to be known as Task Force Cactus, the mission of which would be to seize Climbach, 25 miles to the north. The 2d Battalion, fully motorized, would then follow the 3d Battalion, relieving it at Climbach and passing through it to attain Bobenthal which lay across the German border.

The 3d Battalion remained in Bouxwiller to form the foundation of the Task Force. Lt. Colonel Reynolds, 3d Battalion commander, led the force which was subject to Division control. Integral parts of the force were: Companies A, B and D of the 761st Tank Battalion; Company A, 328th



Uhrwiller, a town on the German main line of resistance, after the 103d Division passed through it.



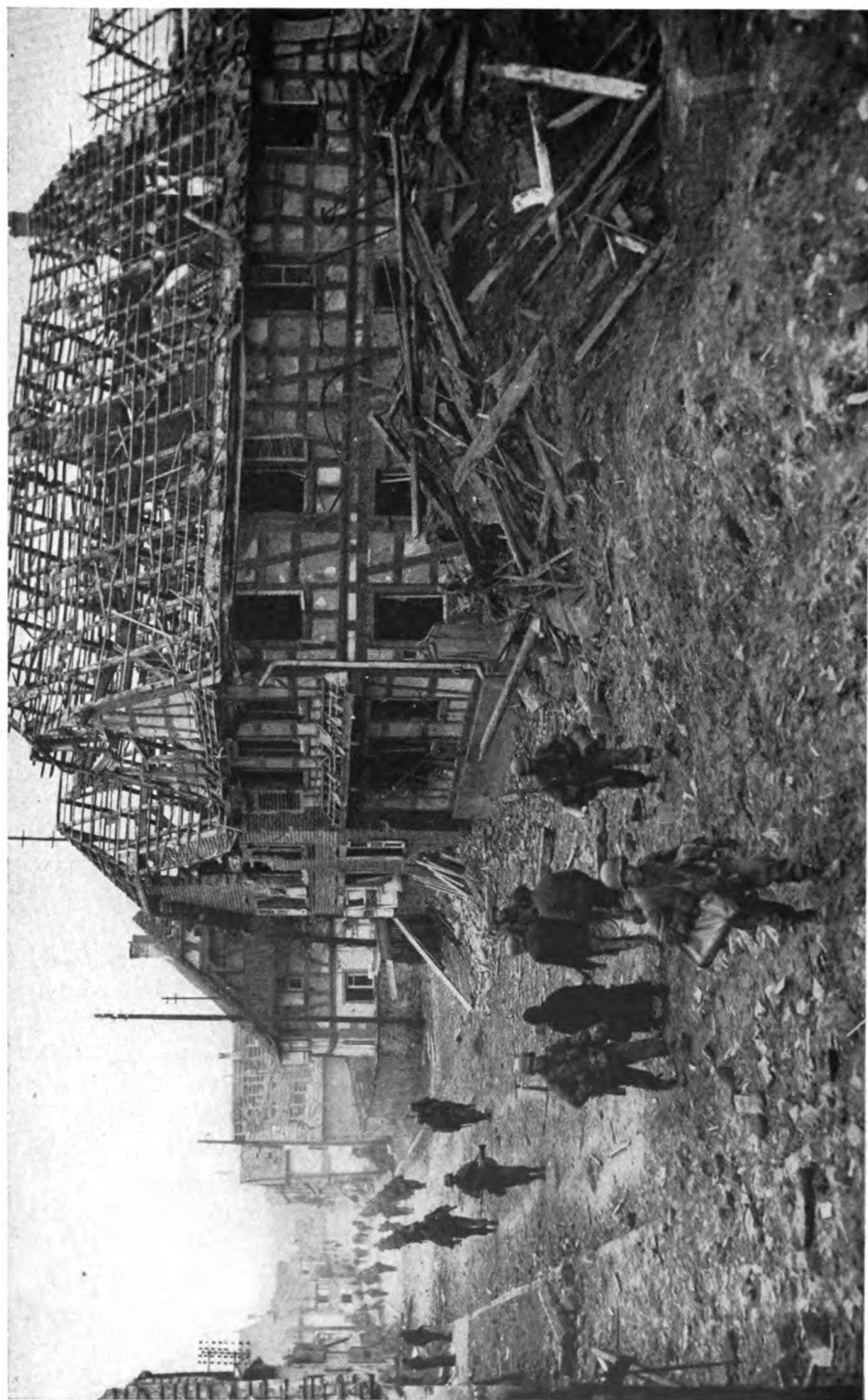
Troops of the 2d Battalion heating C rations.

Engineer Combat Battalion; Signal Detachment, 103d Infantry Division Signal Company; and Signal Detachment, 103d Infantry Division Artillery.

On the 16th the 1st Battalion moved first to Zutzendorf, then to Uhrwiller, finally to Engwiller. When the 1st Battalion's quartering party arrived at Uhrwiller, they found only one building standing and this became the Battalion CP. The 2d Battalion moved directly to Engwiller. When the Regimental CP moved to Engwiller, the 3d Battalion remained at Bouxwiller awaiting the green light for Task Force Cactus.

The kickoff came on the morning of the 17th when the Regiment moved through to take over the zone of the 410th Regiment. On the line again, the 409th was in good company. Attacking on the 103d Division's flanks were the men of the battle-tempered 36th Infantry Division and the men of the 42nd Infantry Division who had valiantly upheld the gallant World War I traditions of the Rainbow Division. According to Field Order No. 10, the Regiment was to drive through the 410th and attack the high ground in the vicinity of Climbach, prepare to assist the 411th in the capture of Bobenthal and press the attack through the Siegfried Line. The 1st Battalion of the 410th was assigned to the Regiment to replace the 3d Battalion of the 409th, a part of Task Force Cactus.

The 2d Battalion moved to Schillersdorf where the rumble of the big guns and the chatter of machine guns were audible. Prisoners were being marched through the town toward the rear in droves. 2d Battalion GIs were eating their last hot meals for some time. G Company feasted on chicken à la king.



The 409th Infantry moves through the ruins of Gundershoffen, France.



Schillersdorf.

At 0700 hours on the 17th, the 409th attacked in a column of battalions with the 2d Battalion in the lead. The 1st Battalion echeloned into the right sector of the zone at Schirlenhof to give the Regiment a solid front.

During that day, both battalions were relatively busy although there was not too much opposition on the part of Jerry.

The 1st Battalion moved forward in its zone through Eberbach and to the woods and high ground east of Woerth, France. The only obstacle was a blown bridge west of Eberbach. The A&P Platoon of the 1st Battalion immediately set forth building a bridge estimated to take four hours' work. The bridge was completed in two hours. During this time traffic from Gundershoffen to Eberbach was heavy and supply became a matter of time. But through the initiative of the motor officer and assistants and battalion S-4, motors and supply were moved forward to Eberbach. The communications platoon and battalion CP were established in Eberbach. Movement to the town was on foot, carrying equipment by hand.

The battalion was at a temporary halt on the outskirts of Woerth, France, only for time to ready a coordinated plan of attack. Few enemy were defending the high ground west of Woerth. They were soon taken care of with the battalion suffering only six casualties. At dusk the battalion had taken Woerth. The taking of this town on the 17th was considered quite an accomplishment as it was one of the largest towns in the Division zone. The battalion CP and headquarters company moved into Woerth the night of the 17th and awaited morning to continue the attack



Crossing the engineer bridge at Gundershoffen.



Moving through Gundershoffen.

to Climbach, France, within one kilometer of the German border and also an outpost of the Siegfried Line.

Morning of the 17th, meanwhile, had found the 2d Battalion attacking behind its commander, Major Louis K. Henninghausen, of Baltimore, Maryland, and S-3 Captain Teitelbaum. Dead Germans were strewn all about the roads as the doughs started their march. Affecting the men on the march also was the sight of a sobering number of American soldiers lying on the cold ground where they had fallen in the previous day's battle. The 410th Infantry had encountered vicious Nazi delaying parties—young Hitlerites whose ages ranged from 15 to 20 years.

In Gundershoffen, the battalion with F Company in the lead, G Company on the right, H Company in direct support and E Company in reserve awaited the major's order to move out. On the right flank of the 2d Battalion was the 3d Battalion. F Company's objective was Froschweiler. G Company was to liberate the nearby town of Reichdorf. Between F and G Companies, Major Hennighausen and his party moved out in the direction of Froschweiler. With him were Captain Teitelbaum, Capt. Henry Beaucheman, of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, of the 382d Field Artillery Battalion and his radiomen, T/5 Hiram Burnie of Tulsa, Oklahoma, his -300 radio set, and the 2d Battalion Intelligence and Reconnaissance Section.

Moving out in squad column formation the companies covered two miles of open country and one mile of dense woodland to reach the out-



The pictures on this and the facing page show men of the 409th Infantry inspecting Maginot forts.



skirts of Froschweiler and Reichdorf. The major set up an OP behind some bushes at the edge of the forest. In front of him were 500 yards of open country and F Company's objective. Captain Beaucheman set up a similar OP and prepared to direct artillery fire at the enemy.

G Company was halted for flank coordination along the edge of the forest and formed a skirmish line. An unsuspecting German walked nonchalantly, at sling arms, headed directly toward the rendezvous of G Company's first platoon. He was hailed at fifty paces but instead of surrendering, he opened fire. 1st Lt. Stanley B. Dickson of Howell, Michigan, promptly rendered him useless to the German cause with a .30 caliber machine-gun burst. A German machine-gun nest atop the hill then opened fire into the company area. Lt. James H. Edwards, of Dallas, Texas, 2d Platoon leader, was wounded in the foot. The Jerry machine gunners beat a hasty withdrawal when over 100 rifles opened fire on them.

Later, the 1st Platoon of G Company left the forest, crossed a clearing and re-entered the neck of the woods on a stream. Here Pfc. Bruce Johnson, of Phoenix, Arizona, the company lead scout, surprised a Jerry washing his mess gear in the stream. The German, another fanatic, started for his rifle which was lying some 15 yards up the bank. He never reached it. Pfc. Johnson, S/Sgt. Robert M. Johnson, of Rib Lake, Wisconsin, and Pfc. DeLamotta Sheftoll, of Houston, Texas, opened fire on him with BARs and rifles. G Company then jumped off in a successful attack on Reichdorf.

Meanwhile, F Company, undergoing a terrific artillery bombardment, swiftly gained the edge of their town, only to meet intense fire from a pillbox which to all appearances was nothing more than another house. Camouflage was excellent. Methodically and in true infantry fashion F Company soon occupied a complete section of Froschweiler. G Company was called in to take the remainder of the town. Twenty-one prisoners were taken. F Company suffered 15 casualties, but not one of them was from small-arms fire.

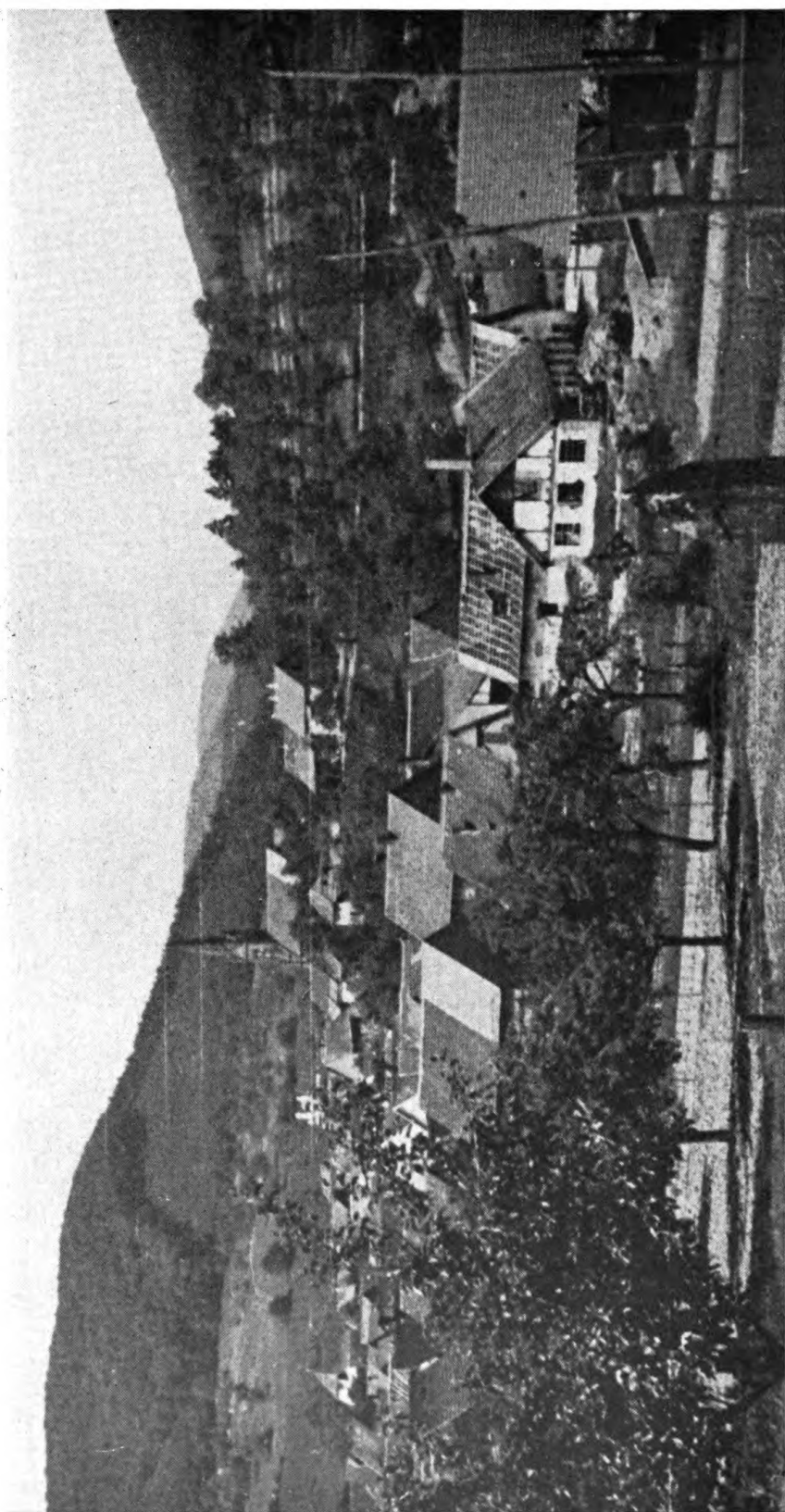
In town the Battalion CP was set up and plans were made for Division Headquarters to move in the following day.

The night of the 17th found the 1st Battalion in its objective of Woerth while the 2d had reached Froschweiler. The Regiment was ready for Phase Two of the drive to the Siegfried Line.

The 1st moved out of Woerth the following morning but rear installations had to wait for blown bridges in the vicinity to be repaired. This was a job for the AT and A&P Platoons. In two hours and twenty minutes two bridges had been built by these platoons and all 1st Battalion transportation including command vehicles of the Regiment, Cannon Company



Prisoners of war (*top*) rounded up in Woerth. *Bottom*: 1st Battalion troops orient themselves as an MP of the 409th moves two Germans caught hiding in Woerth after its capture.



Lembach.



The road to Climbach.

of the Regiment and reconnaissance elements of armored units were able to move forward. The completion of these two bridges in record time was instrumental in the success of the entire Regiment reaching its objective.

Communications became a matter of carrying wire and equipment, although this did not hinder the movement of the battalion as the OP line was moving forward and carrying parties kept linemen supplied with wire.

The remainder of Headquarters Company, aid station, motors and battalion CP moved from Woerth, France, to Mitschdorf. The A&P Platoon and the AT Platoon went forward to clear the numerous roadblocks through mountain passes. This again was accomplished in record time and the battalion in late afternoon had reached Climbach—the same bloody Climbach where the 411th Infantry and the Negro troops of the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion had fought so valiantly in December.

1st Battalion had met no opposition from Woerth to Climbach other than terrain and roadblocks. Ten prisoners were captured. The enemy was running again. There were no illusions, however, about the conspicuous absence of Germans along the route of the attack. Every man in the columns could anticipate the enemy strategy. The Nazis were pulling back into their vaunted Siegfried Line and it was there that the decisive battle had to be fought.

During the day of the 18th the 2d Battalion had moved swiftly from Froschweiler to Climbach. G Company had the lead with F, E and H Companies following in that order. Just before passing Lembach, on the Maginot Line, American P-47s dropped a load of bombs perilously close to the formation. Yellow signal panels were speedily displayed by Sgt.

G. J. Fannigan, of Lubbock, Texas, and Pfc. Charles Greenfield, of Rapid Springs, Michigan. Their frantic haste saved the column from further bombing. No one was hurt.

The 15 miles to Climbach, objective of the 3d Battalion's task force, was covered in march in less than a day's time. No resistance was encountered. It was necessary, however, to pass through an American mine-field. The field had been laid by the 70th Infantry Division above Lembach just prior to the VI Corps withdrawal in January. The Germans had not bothered to clear the field when they occupied the territory.

In Climbach, packed with troops and vehicles of all three battalions, the 2d Battalion OP was set up for the night. Five 105mm shells landed less than 70 yards away from its location, the barrage wounding six men from Cannon Company.

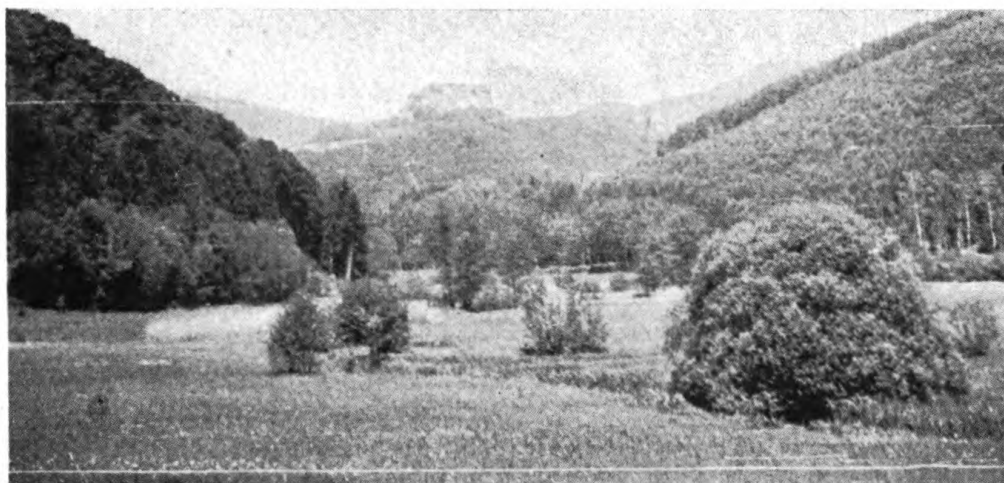
The 1st Battalion moved to high ground overlooking Climbach and the Lauter River and prepared to spend the night just outside Germany—the enemy nation.

During the night, a patrol from A Company crossed the river into Germany. Its presence on "sacred" soil was challenged by a burp-gun-toting sentry and his companions. The Germans opened fire on the A Company patrol as it swung around a sharp turn in the road. Return fire from an M3 killed one Nazi; then, caught in the hail of lead from the burp gun, the patrol hit the ground. Because the German had fired almost point-blank at the officer leading the patrol, Lt. Walter L. Hurst, of Houston, Texas, other members of the party assumed the lieutenant was dead and withdrew without him.

Not more than ninety minutes later the officer returned to battalion headquarters escorting one badly battered erstwhile burp-gunner. Lieutenant Hurst had feigned death and the German had become careless. The officer tackled the enemy soldier and thumped him soundly in a satisfying round of close combat.

Conditions on the 19th were virtually perfect. Weather was warm and visibility unlimited. The attack resumed at 0730 with the battalions moving north up the road through the regimental zone. The 3d Battalion, released on the previous day from attachment to Task Force Cactus, had rejoined the Regiment and was in reserve.

The 1st Battalion received orders to move forward to Reisdorf in route march formation. Before rear installations could move forward, two more bridges had to be built and again this became the job of the A&P Platoon and the AT Platoon of Headquarters Company. Once again the bridges were completed in record time and the A&P and AT Platoons were ordered forward to clear more roadblocks.



North of Lembach. A Maginot fort on the skyline.

At a point several hundred yards south of Reisdorf the enemy offered violent opposition to the advance. At times he searched the road leading into his position with machine-gun fire. The battalion continued moving slowly and cautiously forward, receiving heavy casualties from mortar, artillery, rocket and small-arms fire. The Germans fought savagely to hold the Reisdorf position which was a key point in the Siegfried defense system. A heavy concentration of fire finally drove the 1st Battalion off the road. Further advance had to be made through the hills. The main body deployed, dug in and a reconnaissance in force was dispatched to probe enemy positions.

Numerous attempts were made to gain entrance to Reisdorf. Time and again the enemy, using his fire power wisely, drove the attacks back. Just before dark, plans were revised and additional units were attached to the Combat Team. The 3d Battalion was committed in the sector on the left of the road in an effort to outflank the enemy in the town. On verbal order from the Commanding General of the Division, one platoon of M12 self-propelled 155mm guns, was attached to the Regiment.

The 3d Battalion received its order to attack on the left side of the trail and to take Hills 518 and 426 at 1700 hours. The plan of attack was a column of companies in the order of I, K and L. The 1st Platoon of M Company was attached to K Company and the 2d Platoon to I Company. The next hour and a half Lt. Colonel Reynolds and Captain Jinks made a hasty ground reconnaissance. Company I was assembled and moved forward to the line of departure where the platoon leaders had only a few minutes for their reconnaissance and orders. The line of departure was situated on the forward slope of a steep hill. Immediately to the front separating the company from their immediate objective, Hill 518, Jerry had cut down all of the tall pine trees for approximately 300 yards. The enemy had observation from both flanks and from the front. The battalion

commander and his OP staff posted themselves behind the line of departure, crossed their fingers and said a prayer. The attack was on.

At 1830 hours three platoon scouts of I Company moved cautiously forward into the tangled mass of trees. Within thirty minutes the 3d Platoon was across the valley and reorganized at the foot of Hill 518. This platoon advanced until hit by heavy machine-gun and small-arms fire. Company I's 2d Platoon moved to the left and not until their support platoon, the 1st, began crossing the roadblock did the machine gun and artillery fire shift to this point, causing many casualties.

Company K was ordered forward to the approximate position of Company I's line of departure with the mission of covering their rear and keeping contact. Jerry was zeroed in on this area with his machine guns and artillery. Casualties were heavy. The darkness, difficult terrain and heavy woods made contact and control difficult to maintain. When the order to dig in was given, men dug in as never before. Company L moved up the hill and secured the battalion's left flank for the night, reaching their position at approximately 0400 hours.

While setting up its weapons for close supporting fire, Company M received heavy artillery, mortar and *Nebelwerfer* (Screaming Meemie) fire. Pfc. George Ellis, of Robinsdale, Minnesota, medic with the 1st Platoon, was wounded in the leg by shrapnel but continued caring for the injured members of his platoon until he had taken care of everyone. For his action he was awarded the Silver Star.

The battalion OP, set up by Lt. Colonel Reynolds, remained in position through artillery and mortar fire until 2230 hours at which time the leading companies were dug in and everything seemed secure for the night. As they started their rest for the night, Screaming Meemies again came in. T/5 Leonard Hersher, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, radio operator, slipped down the steep embankment and sprained his ankle. Lt. Colonel Reynolds helped evacuate him to the medics at the bottom of the hill.

The regimental order was to continue the attack, taking Hill 518 and the hill beyond it, Hill 426, as soon as possible. This was to give the Regiment an anchor or pivot for bringing through the armored task force. On the morning of the 20th, K Company was ordered forward on the reverse slope of Hill 518, taking up positions abreast of Company I. Company L was to move to the positions vacated by K Company.

On completion of Company K's move abreast of Company I both companies were ordered to send out combat patrols to their front and flanks in order to feel out positions prior to attacking. Pfc. William P. Heck, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, led a patrol to Company K's left and Pvt.

Hayden J. Land, of Schulls Mills, North Carolina, led one to their front. Lt. Walter E. Kruger, of Everett, Washington, of Company I, felt out the zone of advance. Pfc. Heck's patrol managed to reconnoiter an enemy machine-gun stand before being driven off by concussion grenades, exploding land mines and machine-gun fire. His report to Captain Bell enabled the company commander to dispose his attached heavy weapons in positions from which the enemy machine-gun fire could be neutralized. Company commanders consolidated the information in their zone and coordinated for the attack which was to begin at 1600 hours.

Company I led with the 1st Platoon, followed closely by the 2d and 3d Platoons. Stiff resistance was encountered approximately halfway to the top and the 2d and 3d Platoons immediately were committed and the hill taken by effective utilization of marching fire. Company K had also advanced about halfway without trouble when it was pinned down by machine-gun fire. Company M's 1st Platoon machine gun section led by Lt. John D. Schramm, of Arkansas City, Arkansas, swung into action and neutralized the Jerry machine guns. A squad from the 3d Platoon worked up close enough to the concrete pillboxes to silence them with bazooka fire. Concussion grenades were being rolled down the hill and fire was heavy. When the entire company started forward under marching fire—really climbing fire—nothing could stop them. At the top of the hill was a small clearing covered by two pillboxes. The right one was taken by K's 1st Platoon and the left one by the 2d Platoon.

For gallantry in action during the assault, Pfc. Jack Greener, of Spring Valley, Illinois, medical aid man was awarded the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star. Once through the strong point, K Company made a junction with I Company and set up a defensive perimeter for the night. Once again the Germans loosed a terrific artillery barrage. More than 200 rounds fell into the 3d Battalion zone in a half-hour period but there was no quitting those hard-earned positions. In need of more ammunition, M Company called for 16 volunteers, who along with Lt. Chester S. Bergeron, of Hoquiam, Washington, got the ammo through.

Difficult terrain made evacuation of casualties by the normal litter squads impossible. Volunteers were asked for until the litter bearers totaled 30. The 300-yard-long tree block previously mentioned now became an obstacle course and each trip required two to three hours. It was not until 0100 hours on the 21st that the last litter cases were finally evacuated to the battalion aid station. Lt. Joseph L. Turecek, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, made trip after trip, giving words of encouragement to his men.

Supply was another serious problem as the only route was up and down



Regimental CP in dugouts near the Siegfried Line.

two mountains and over the tree block mentioned but this position was still under constant enemy observation and fire from the flank. Carrying parties were led personally by Capt. Martin P. Gilligan, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and were composed of volunteers from all sections of battalion headquarters and Company M. Pfc. Daniel C. Payne of Haw River, North Carolina, and Pfc. Stanley L. Slighthan, of Janesville, Wisconsin, were outstanding in their efforts and both were recommended for the Bronze Star. Company L was playing a major role in the supply problem. When ordered to move up Hill 518 securing the battalion's left flank, each man was loaded with rations or water.

During the 20th, the 1st Battalion had its hands full too. B and C Companies moved across open terrain to reach the enemy trenches. T/Sgt. Martin J. O'Grady, of Detroit, Michigan, and Pfc. Quintus W. Lehmann, of the 3d Platoon were the first C Company men to enter the German installations. B Company which had suffered so heavily at Sélestat in the same Siegfried Line in December was moving to the right of C Company. Four pillboxes fell to B Company. Momentarily, contact was lost between the companies and alert enemy forces quickly exploited the gap. One pillbox was lost to enemy infiltration. In the ensuing fire fight, Lt. Kelly V. Fite, Jr., of Hamilton, Georgia, C Company platoon leader, was killed. The leader of the 2d Platoon, Lt. Andrew G. Wahlquist, of Tridell, Utah, assumed command of the 1st Platoon and led the reorganized company in an assault which brought the pillbox back into American control.

Those mistakes which had been made in December were not being made again. The Germans were facing an experienced, battle-tested foe. There was no opportunity for the enemy infantry to trap the 409th In-



Mules picketed awaiting use to carry supplies to the 1st and 3d Battalions.

fantry in pillboxes and trenches as they had done before. This time there was no pausing in the pillboxes. Once a bunker had fallen the Cactus infantrymen pushed on through to a position that could not be easily found by the German artillerymen. This application of proved tactics was instrumental in saving many lives. Nightfall of the 20th found the 1st Battalion atop a hill with the 3d Battalion in the valley to the left of Reisdorf.

With the resumption of the attack on the 21st, the brunt of the assault fell on the 1st Battalion. The 3d Battalion met nothing but sporadic artillery and mortar fire. Combat patrols from I and K Companies discovered that German positions in depth had been evacuated. 3d Battalion patrols also felt out Hill 426 which was located to the north of Reisdorf. The attack was coordinated for 1200 hours and again through the use of marching fire and with full use of both light and heavy machine guns, Hill 426, regimental objective, was taken.

Fifteen minutes after the 1st Battalion attack was launched, the companies were pinned down by a mortar and artillery barrage. Capt. John T. Melko, of Fresno, California, C Company commander, was wounded and command of the company was assumed again by Lt. Guido V. Magaro, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, who had led the company on two previous occasions. A raiding force from the 1st and 2d Platoons led by Lieutenant Wahlquist knocked out an 88 dug in at the bottom of the hill and captured the crew. Lieutenant Wahlquist was subsequently awarded the Silver Star. The company spent the night in the same defensive positions occupied the previous night.

That night supply and evacuation continued to be a problem for the 3d Battalion but through the untiring and continuous efforts of everyone



1st Battalion aid station near Reisdorf.

concerned, supply was accomplished and all casualties were evacuated. In three days' time a total of 107 men had been evacuated through a narrow, hazardous and difficult route. The night of the 21st saw heavy mortar and artillery fire, disrupting wire contact. Sgt. Leroy Schneller, of Battalion Headquarters Company, and Plains, Wisconsin, who was awarded the Silver Star, worked tirelessly through the dark hours checking and repairing the wires. At 0600 March 22 Headquarters Company's A&P Platoon again cleared a new trail in order to utilize mules for supply.

The situation improved so rapidly that the mules were used only a short while for carrying equipment and supplies. Early on the morning of the 22nd, Companies I and K again felt out their front and flanks with combat patrols and found that the forward wall had cracked. The companies were able to move to the next ridge to their front, Heidenburg Ridge, without any difficulty. Members of the AT Platoon, Battalion Headquarters Company, took 11 prisoners of war who had been by-passed by the leading companies and were located within 150 yards of the battalion CP.

On the 1st Battalion front, Company A came out of reserve the morning of the 22nd and pushed through C Company in a bid to sweep around the left flank. Supporting artillery units had effectively smoked the valley



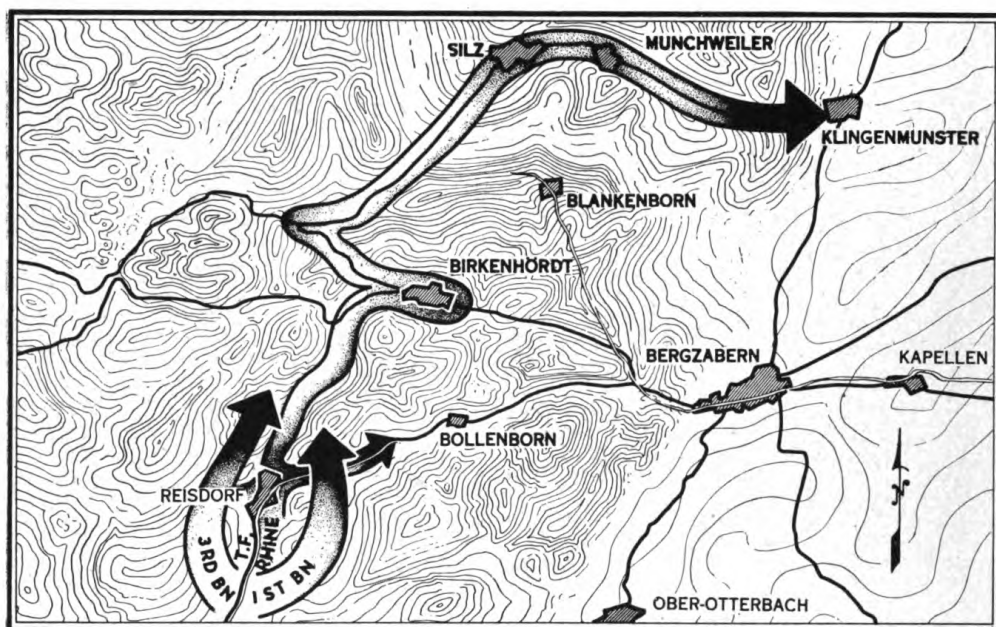
An American tank which was booby-trapped and placed in the center of the road to block our way into Reisdorf.

and the mist of the morning also served to conceal the A Company maneuver. B Company provided the base of fire from the high ground. Halfway across the valley, A Company, led by its commanding officer, Capt. Edgar J. Lambert, of West Palm Beach, Florida, was challenged by automatic-weapons fire and mortars. The leading platoons, 1st and 3d, resorted to marching fire and once again the Germans were completely pinned down. Those platoons secured the high ground while Lt. Charles H. Flynn, Jr., of Atlanta, Georgia, led his 3d Platoon against the pillboxes in the valley. Four Wehrmacht officers were captured in one bunker after Lieutenant Flynn had lowered a beehive charge against an aperture by means of a wire.

By early evening of the 22nd the high ground above Reisdorf had been cleared. The 1st and 3d Battalions had provided the interference. They had cleared the way through the treacherous pillbox-infested terrain. They had broken the back of the German life-line. True, a heavy price had been paid but a great victory had been won. The 1st Battalion's total casualties for March 22 included 8 officers and 99 enlisted men wounded in action, 16 enlisted men killed in action. Some of those reported missing reported back for duty later.

In the meantime, in the early evening of the 22nd, a platoon of G Company following directly behind each tank of a platoon of tanks from the 761st Tank Battalion, cleared Reisdorf itself and set the stage for the next day.

Now the Regiment was prepared to send its backfield into action. Since the 21st the purpose of the 1st and 3d Battalion assaults had been to clear



a path for a task force which was being formed on that date under the command of the 409th Infantry Regiment. The force, commanded by Lt. Col. Paul Bates, of Boomtown, New Jersey, consisted of Companies A, B and D of his 761st Tank Battalion; 2d Battalion, 409th Infantry Regiment; Reconnaissance Platoon, 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion; and Signal Detachment, 103rd Signal Company. Major Hennighausen, 409th Infantry battalion commander, commanded the infantrymen riding the tanks. The combination might have been called Task Force Revenge instead of Task Force Rhine. Every unit had some old scores to settle with the Germans.

The mission of the Task Force and of the 409th Infantry was to exploit the breakthrough in the Division zone, which the 409th Infantry had accomplished, advance in the direction of Landau, sieze the town of Klingenmunster on the edge of the Haardt Mountains, making a gateway for the 14th Armored Division to pass through the 103rd Division on the Rhine Valley Plain.

Upon leaving Reisdorf, the task force was split into two columns, one heading straight north on a dirt road made by the Germans to supply their Siegfried Line positions, the other heading east on a well paved road, leading to Bollenborn. The force heading north had the difficult job of filling an antitank ditch in short time. The force heading east encountered a 200-yard-long roadblock. The 2d Platoon of F Company acted as a covering force and the 1st Platoon assisted the engineers in clearing the road. The last tree was just being shoved out of the way when a concealed antitank gun protecting the town of Bollenborn opened fire on the column knocking out one Sherman tank. While the tank burned,



The crossroad at Reisdorf.

more fire came pouring in. While this was taking place, Colonel Lloyd, Regimental Commander who was making a reconnaissance of this situation in a jeep, calmly directed troops under fire, causing any panic that had developed to cease.

Meanwhile, the northern column which was led by G Company riding tanks, took the town of Birkenhordt. Because of the progress being made in that direction, the eastern column was rerouted to follow the northern column. Regimental Headquarters and the remainder of the Regiment followed as rapidly as possible.

That night was spent deep behind German lines but nobody slept. The task force was immediately ordered to advance in a northeasterly direction to take Silz and then proceed east to Klingenmünster during the night.

Soon after midnight the tanks appeared on the outskirts of Silz. The attack was so swift an enemy antitank gun was knocked out before its crew could man the weapon. The gun was in position and there was plenty of ammunition but the column had knifed through the darkness so quickly the enemy was caught unprepared. The town of Silz was burning brightly from fires started by shells from the tank guns.

The experienced Negro soldiers who manned the tanks employed reconnaissance by fire. Every stretch of ground along the line of march was systematically and mercilessly searched by fire from 75mm, 76mm and 37mm cannons and .30 and .50 caliber machine guns. This was fire power with vengeance. As one of the colored gunners put it: "Man, we learned this jive from General Patton." Not to be outdone, the Cactus foot soldiers kept a steady stream of .30 caliber ammunition blazing off into



Colonel Lloyd and Lt. Colonel Strange at Reisdorf.

the ditches and hills along the road. M1 rifles and Browning automatics were red hot.

The tanks sped unimpeded through Silz. There was an end-of-the-world terror about the place. Hellish fires cast weird shadows, screams of terrified civilians mingled with the agonizing groans of the enemy wounded. Twoscore enemy prisoners taken in the town claimed to have been cut off from their units. One obliging doughfoot of G Company helped a screaming woman get her cow out of a burning barn before the roof fell in. Major Hennighausen, along with Pfc. Bruce E. Smith, of Clarion, Iowa, ferreted four Germans out of one house and got a P38 pistol for their work.

Speeding on toward Münchweiler, the armored column surprised a Wehrmacht column of artillery, antitank guns and supplies that had waited too long before evacuating. This was an opportunity that had never been encountered by the power-crazed tank pilots. They sent their steel monsters bulling into the German column, strewing wreckage as they thundered forward. Tanks crushed men and horses. Cannon fire blasted trucks into twisted masses of flaming steel. Erstwhile Supermen ran screaming down the road attempting to surrender.

Tabulation showed the following German matériel strewn along the road: 25 trucks, 5 tracked vehicles, 10 automobiles, 12 kitchen vehicles, 5 88mm guns, 2 50mm antitank guns, 12 37mm guns, 5 75mm guns, 1 170mm gun, 116 horse-drawn vehicles, 9 *Nebelwerfers* and 12 horse-



Colonel Lloyd and visiting brass at Reisdorf. Regimental control radio for Task Force Rhine can be seen in the background.

drawn caissons. Enemy losses in personnel and horses were never fully tabulated.

It was not until lead elements of the armored force had entered Münchweiler that serious difficulty was encountered. Explosions from a burning German ammunition truck separated the main body of tanks from the supply train and the supporting light armor. Supply vehicles moved up after the explosions had subsided, but the light tanks did not get through.

A jeep patrol sent back to make contact with the 761st Tank Battalion's "Mosquito Fleet" discovered that a force of Germans had taken advantage of the momentary confusion and had moved down from the hills to cut off the rear guard. The men in the jeeps fought their way back to the main body and for the remainder of the operation the jeeps acted as rear guard.

At dawn of the 24th Task Force Rhine had reached its objective, Klingenmünster. A fire fight developed on the outskirts of the town when a *Panzerfaust* opened fire on the column from the rear, but the guns of Task Force Rhine silenced the *Panzerfaust* before it could do much damage and the tanks and infantry moved on to take the town.

The 3d Battalion, riding on the light tanks and supply vehicles of the task force started before dawn, in the wake of the task force, to close the gap filled with Jerries behind the 2d Battalion. It took them until after noon of the next day to fight their way through scattered pockets of



One of the hills, many of which the 409th had to take by storm, in the Siegfried Line.

resistance and to remove a two-mile-long column of German horses tangled in their harness, and wrecked vehicles. This enormous roadblock of living flesh and wrecked vehicles was probably the most difficult that the 409th Infantry had ever removed.

Just outside Klingenberg the Force had run into Landeck Castle which because of its commanding position made it a serious threat to the Americans. To chase the enemy out of the castle, Major Hennighausen dispatched Lt. James R. Holmes, of Paris, Texas, and his 3d Platoon of E Company. The doughboys started up the hill toward the castle just as dawn was breaking. Back in the middle ages, the Robber Barons of Klingenberg had lived in the castle on the hill and had waged war on the countryside below from their excellent defensive position. But the Barons of Klingenberg could not have been any more disagreeable than the twentieth century Nazis who defended the castle against E Company's 3d Platoon.

The whole platoon had passed by the body of one Jerry before the platoon guide, S/Sgt. Frederick Sytsma, of Chicago, Illinois, became suspicious. He covered Private Nolan Brown, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, while Brown investigated. A swift kick where Brown thought it would do the most good suddenly brought the "corpse" to life and he sprang up to use the rifle concealed underneath him. Sergeant Sytsma was ready, however, and placed an M1 slug between the eyes of the Jerry

who no longer had to play dead. Sergeant Sytsma said, "I'll kick every corpse I see now after that deal!"

The hill seemed to the men to go up at about a 90-degree angle and the wily Jerries tossed down boulders as well as hand grenades on the advancing platoon.

The defenders had scattered snipers liberally throughout the woods. And to add to the difficulty, some of the platoon's buddies who were down in the valley and did not know quite where Lieutenant Holmes's men were in the darkness and who thought they had seen some Germans at the base of the hill, took a few shots at the heels of the Company E platoon as it moved up the hill.

In the words of the platoon sergeant, T/Sgt. Danny Shea, of St. Louis, Missouri, this is how the hill was taken: "I took two squads up the hill on the left, while Lieutenant Holmes, Sergeant Sytsma and the rest of the platoon sneaked up a defiladed approach on the right and surprised the Germans." Forty prisoners were taken including a lieutenant colonel and several junior officers.

After Silz had been taken, Capt. Patrick D. White, of Nelsonville, Ohio, and Capt. Thomas B. Spickard, of Roanoke, Virginia, Service Company officers, went roaming through the hill trails on foot looking for German equipment which could be used. After several hours they returned with 24 prisoners captured in the woods. Total bag for the Service Company for March 24-25 was 66 enlisted men and one officer captured.

The Task Force had not run into any roadblocks, mines or blown bridges after the first tank trap at the main line of resistance since the Germans used the same route over which to withdraw.

Direction of Task Force Rhine had been virtually perfect. Not once had the column been disorganized. Not one vehicle was forced to leave the road. Whenever a tank commander met a problem he couldn't cope with, he radioed back for instructions.

After the first bold dash behind enemy lines the tremendous fire power of the tanks and infantry had discouraged any resistance from the Jerry rear-echelon troops. The task force had few casualties and had taken well over 100 prisoners. No one will ever know how many casualties were suffered from the reconnaissance fire. Bodies of Germans lay in the hills and in the fields all the way from Birkenhorst to Klingenmünster. Over 15 miles of chaos lay behind the Task Force when it pulled into Klingenmünster.

Miracles of medicine were performed by the surgeons and aid men who were attached to the task force. Despite the speed of the column and al-



Tanks attached to the 3d Battalion follow in the wake of Task Force Rhine. The scene is outside of Münchweiler.

most impossible conditions, Capt. Stanley Sahn, of Brooklyn, New York, performed delicate operations on seriously wounded patients. In a speeding, jolting ambulance Captain Sahn gave 1500 cubic centimeters of blood plasma to Pvt. Silvester L. Moreno, of Joplin, Missouri. The captain was assisted by Pfc. Richard Hittle, of Denver, Colorado, who had obtained the vital plasma from another ambulance and passed it through the window to Captain Sahn. Medical aid man Hittle was forced to cling to the rear of the ambulance as the column suddenly spurred ahead.

In spite of the heroic work of Captain Sahn and Hittle, however, Private Moreno was still in a critical condition. The plasma was not enough. Because he did not have enough red blood corpuscles to join with it, he needed whole blood.

Once in Klingenstein, Captain Sahn faced the almost insurmountable task of procuring the precious whole blood. Because of the speed of the armored spearhead and the wake of destruction to the rear there was no communication or transportation to the field hospital. Captain Sahn went to Captain Beauchemin, battalion artillery liaison officer. Immediately a train of events was started that for sheer drama and devotion to duty matched anything in military medical annals. Captain Beauchemin enlisted the aid of a tank radioman who contacted an artillery observation plane. The plane relayed the urgent appeal to the Division Artillery from where it was relayed to the 103d Division CP. The field hospital was then contacted by Division CP.

HEADQUARTERS 409th INFANTRY
Office of the Regimental Commander

25 March 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation

TO : Battalion and Separate Company Commanders, 409th Infantry

1. Again, as always in the past, I am extremely proud of your latest accomplishments. You have demonstrated beyond a doubt that you are a "combat team" in every sense of the word, a team now seasoned and proficient to a high degree.

2. You have forced the enemy to surrender his position in a portion of the vaulted Siegfried fortifications, positions which for years he has called impregnable. Not only have you breached this line but you have thoroughly demonstrated to them the power, the drive and the fury that will continue to be thrown against him regardless of where he may choose to defend.


3. Think back over your training at Camp Howze. Remember the principles taught you in the attack of a fortified position and ask yourself now, "Was that training a waste of time or has it paid huge dividends in lives saved and a mission successfully accomplished?" Your training has been sound; your outstanding achievements are a direct result of this training, a direct result of your willingness to learn and willingness to work.

4. To the men recently joined, you are the backbone of our strength. Do not for a moment consider yourselves apart from those of us who have possibly had a little more experience, a little more opportunity. You are the regiment and to you goes the full credit for the accomplishments of your organization along with each and every other member of this team.

5. Cooperation, teamwork, proper employment of your weapons and leadership HAVE BEEN OUTSTANDING. Many of you have been called upon to lead squads and platoons for the first time. You have done your job well. You have carried on knowing full well your duties and your obligations to your men and you have set a magnificent example. It behooves each man to prepare himself now for the greater responsibilities which lie ahead of us.

6. I commend you and wish you the same continuing success in the days to come.

7. This letter will be read to all personnel at the next formation.


CLAUDIUS L. LLOYD
Col, 409th Inf
Commanding



More of the wreckage of the destroyed German column between Münchweiler and Klingenmünster.



A bulldozer clears the road of debris outside of Klingenstein.

Less than two hours after the message had first been broadcast, a messenger leaped from a bicycle in front of the 2d Battalion aid station and delivered the blood to Captain Sahn. The messenger was Major LaRue, Executive Officer of the Division Medical Battalion. When the Major's jeep had been halted by a roadblock, he abandoned the vehicle and continued the hazardous trip across country on a requisitioned bicycle.

Such was the splendid cooperation received from every unit that had a part in Task Force Rhine.

In mid-morning of the 24th the 14th Armored Division came roaring up from the rear to pass through the 409th Infantry and continued the relentless drive to the Rhine River. The work of the 409th Infantry Regiment was completed for the moment. The next day, a squad of the Regiment's Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, lead by Platoon Sergeant Pike, made official contact with the 10th Armored Division at Landau and physically closed the pocket. The doughboys had helped close the Palatinate pocket in which the Third and Seventh Armies had trapped thousands of Germans. The Regiment that had been born as a combat unit in the bloody valley of Taintrux and St. Dié had reached maturity in the strongholds of the Siegfried Line and along the road to Klingenstein. The Regiment had come into its own.

For its victory in the Siegfried, the 409th paid 31 men killed in action, 9 men missing in action, 3 men died of wounds, 41 seriously wounded in:

action, 199 slightly wounded in action, 1 seriously injured in action and 27 slightly injured in action, for a total of 311 men.

During the four days that followed, mopping up was continued with the hills being searched for Germans who had managed to evade the lightning push. On the morning of the 28th, the Regiment relieved elements of the 66th Infantry Regiment, 71st Infantry Division, at Oggersheim and Ludwigshafen. 1st and 2d Battalion soldiers assigned to outposts in the latter city were first in the Regiment to see the historic Rhine River. Assigned positions were along the west bank of the river and included one of the I. G. Farben Industrien plants, wrecked by continuous bombardment.

Further operations in March were devoted to the river outpost, search of surrounding towns and guard for the Allied Military Government.

INTO OLD AUSTRIA
April 1 to May 31, 1945

INTO OLD AUSTRIA

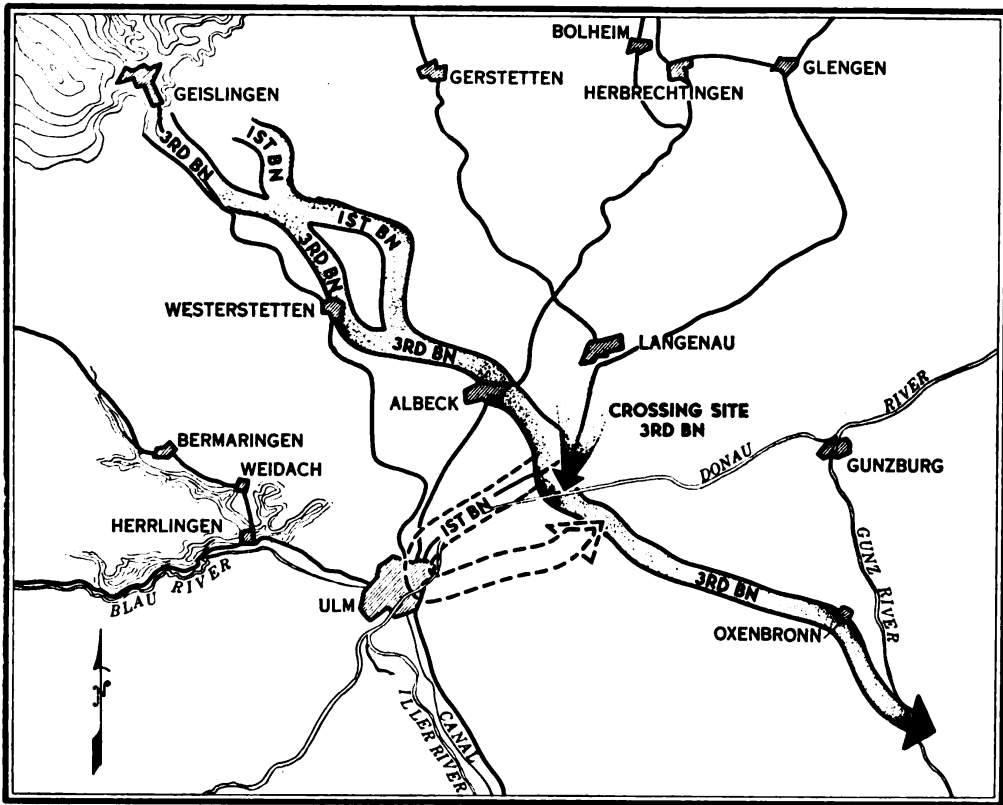
The 409th Infantry devoted the greater part of what was to prove to be the climactic month of the war in Europe, a month in which it was destined to reach the German-Austrian border, to the policing and patrolling of designated areas, the evacuation of displaced persons and the support of the Allied Military Government in its sector.

The first of the month found the Regiment still in the vicinity of Oggersheim, with troops in Ludwigshafen and along the banks of the Rhine River, outpostting against possibility of Jerries recrossing the river. The other side of the Rhine was cleared by other American divisions and the 409th Infantry was freed of contact with the enemy. Then the 103d Infantry Division, including the 409th Infantry, went into Seventh Army reserve. The regimental CP moved to Worms and the remainder of the Regiment was spread over an area to the west of the city and west of the Rhine. However the Regiment was not destined to spend any great length of time at one place. As the troops of Seventh Army fought their way forward it became necessary for the 409th Infantry to move forward also, and to occupy an even larger area in the rear of the Seventh Army front lines. On April 7, the Regiment crossed the Rhine River on engineer-built bridges which replaced those blasted by the Germans in their retreats, and the CP moved to the vicinity of Rossdorf, east of Darmstadt, to continue garrison and police duties. The stay there was short, and the Regiment moved on April 9 to the northeast and settled in the vicinity of Steinau at which the regimental CP was established.

A regulation requiring the inventory of all food stocks and materials in the company's respective areas brought many varied reports. Captain McBee's H Company found themselves guards of, among other things, a canalboat load of barley, a canalboat load of copper, a Jerry aircraft sub-station, a distillery, two breweries and five Wehrmacht hospitals complete with patients, nurses and equipment. Closer inspection revealed 80 destroyed bombs, seven trucks, a cache of machine guns, 80mm mortars and dynamite, a high-octane gasoline distributing point, a trainload of automobile tires, an artillery ammunition distributing point and a quartermaster supply dump of field ranges and dishes.

What's more, German soldiers were bicycling around the area in full uniform. But they were soon rounded up and placed in the 409th's prisoner-of-war cages.

In dealing with the thousands of civilians and refugees who brought their problems to the company commanders, Lieutenant Henneke, commanding E Company, ran across one of the most complicated problems when a Polish national who had joined the French Army, was captured by the Germans, liberated by the Americans, wanted to know if he could marry a German *Fräulein* and take her to France to live.



On the 14th the 1st Battalion relieved elements of the Seventh Army Security Command guards at installations in the vicinity of Aschaffenburg. The following day, evacuation of displaced persons continued with the entire Bad Orb Displaced Persons Center being cleared out.

For the ten days that followed, officers and enlisted men of the 409th had their hands full settling the problems in an area which had recently been conquered by the Third Army. Main tasks were the rounding up of prisoners who still sought refuge in the hills after the swift lightning-like advance and the reallocating of displaced personnel. On April 11, a displaced persons team was assigned to the Combat Team and a displaced persons collecting point was set up in Gelnhausen.

Elements of the Combat Team were relieved by units of the 276th Infantry Regiment of the 70th Division in the area west of Aschaffenburg on the 18th and plans were made to complete the relief of the Regiment the following day.

Almost every man in the Regiment realized that the war was drawing rapidly to a close in the European Theater and there were many guesses as to whether or not the 409th Combat Team would see action again before Germany was finally brought to its knees. The 19th of April answered that question. The Regiment was alerted for a long movement to the south in the vicinity of Heilbronn where the Seventh Army was pre-



Scenes of the almost complete destruction of Ludwigshafen by our Air Forces.

paring to launch its lightning blow to end the war in the southern part of Germany.

Many strategists—even in the highest circles—believed that Nazi bigshots would move to the mountain “Redoubt” area in Bavaria and attempt to continue the fight using natural fortification if their war in the north failed, which it was rapidly doing, with the U. S. First, Third and Ninth Armies racing for a meeting with the Russians south of Berlin.

Movement to the south was started by the 409th on April 20 and after a seven-hour ride due south, the 382d Field Artillery Battalion, Cannon Company, Antitank Company and Regimental Staff closed into their new areas in late evening. The Combat Team ceased in accordance with orders from the Commanding General of the 103d Infantry Division, the 382d Field Artillery Battalion reverting to Division control. The 3d Battalion was alerted for a special mission for VI Corps and moved to its new area before daylight to await orders.



Wreckage of the main bridge across the Rhine between Ludwigshafen and Mannheim.
The bridge was blown by the Germans in their retreat across the Rhine.

On the 21st the Regiment continued to comply with Operations Instruction No. 82, Headquarters 103d Infantry Division, which listed the Division mission as the seizure of its objective in the vicinity of Kirchheim after passing through elements of the 44th and 100th Infantry Divisions and attacking in its zone. The 409th, with Company A, 328th Engineer Combat Battalion, and Company B, 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion, attached was to follow the advance of the 411th Regimental Combat Team, be prepared to repulse counterattacks from the west, and likewise prepared to pass through either the 410th or 411th Infantry Regiments on Division order. The 2d Battalion closed in Houbersbronn at 1915 hours and the Regiment followed in the zone of the 411th in compliance with the operations instruction.

On the 22nd the 409th followed the advances of the 411th Infantry and moved to new assembly areas. The 2d and 3d Battalions, the latter remaining alerted for its special VI Corps mission that was never to materialize, closed in Kirchheim. The 1st Battalion moved to Schorndorf.

Early on the 23rd the 2d Battalion was attached by verbal order to Combat Team 410. The alert of the 3d Battalion for its projected mission under VI Corps auspices was cancelled and the unit marched to Kirchheim. Elements in the Seventh Army rear area were released from their security mission at 1200. Cannon Company, after spirited negotiations and the employment of the full power of its weapons against them, captured 300 prisoners in the woods in the section.

The 2d Battalion was used by the 410th Infantry to free from encirclement one of the battalions of the 410th which had run into a little



The ponton bridge across the Rhine at Worms.

trouble. After rapidly freeing the encircled battalion the 2d Battalion of the 409th Infantry continued on to take the intermediate objective of the 410th Infantry—Urach.

On the 24th the 1st and 3d Battalions closed in a new area in the vicinity of Geislingen and relieved elements of the 44th Infantry Division. The 3d Battalion was assigned the mission of reconnaissance and by the end of the day had advanced steadily against meager opposition. The 1st Battalion, also meeting light resistance, cleared the towns of Stubersheim, Hoffstett-Emerguch and Ettlenschiess. The 2d Battalion, which had been attached to the 410th, reverted to regimental control and was en route to a new area as the day ended.

The Regiment continued to advance on the 25th, reaching the Danube River at 1700 with the 1st and 3d Battalions abreast. Reconnaissance of the river line was made and a likely site for an assault crossing was selected.

Excitement reigned in the CP of the 3d Battalion as word spread around that the famous river had been reached. Out in the field, the men were just as excited as their officers.

"Move as fast as possible leading with tanks and try to get a bridge intact over that stream," was the order of one commander.

"That stream is the Danube, isn't it, sir," someone asked, and was told that it was.

Thus the information got around to the battalion that the famous river was being approached and everyone began sweating out the river crossing.

Company K was attached to a tank company which was under regimental control. This unit had several small task forces organized, each with light tanks ridden by Company K doughboys. Task forces were used to clean up small pockets of resistance and towns on the flanks of the route of advance. One force attempted to gain the Danube bridge, but



POW stockade at Worms guarded by the 409th Infantry.

was stopped by guarded roadblocks leading to the bridge. The bridge was blown when the tanks approached the roadblocks.

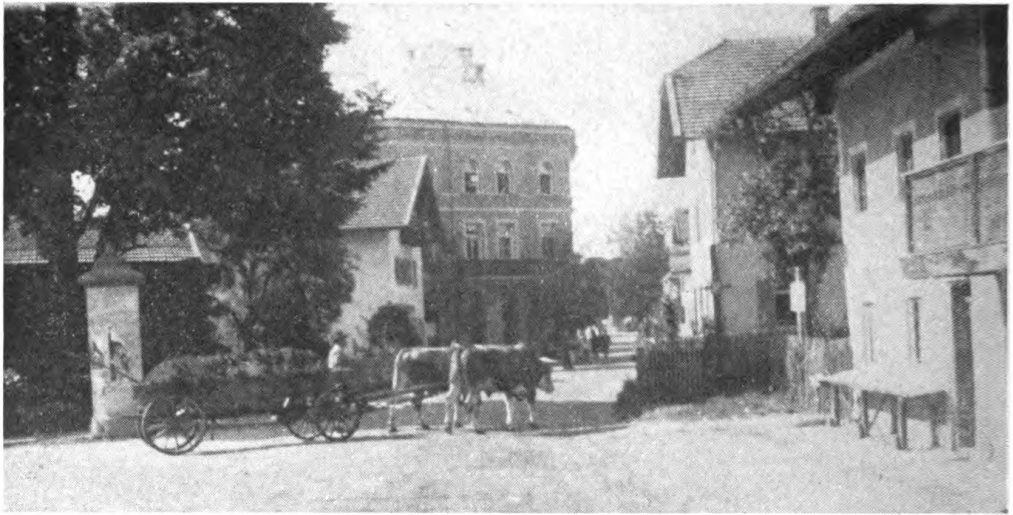
The companies moved out in the order: I and L, each with a machine-gun platoon attached and with Mortar Platoon support. Company K was to assemble and come under battalion control as the reserve company as soon as possible.

Company I moved out from the hills across approximately 1500 yards of open flat ground and into 1000–1500 yards of heavy woods that banked the Danube. Company I had perfect dispersion and moved up to the banks of the river without hesitation, although a few rounds of Jerry mortar came close. Company I straddled the old bridge site and was followed by Company L which slipped to Company I's right, putting the two companies abreast on the banks of the river.

Very accurate sniper fire was received from across the river and resulted in several men being killed. (All shot through the head.) Mortar fire was also encountered, the German SPs were active, dropping shells into Ober-Elchingen, a town on the hills overlooking the valley. Several houses in which artillery, cannon and mortar OPs were located were hit. It appeared that the Danube was being well defended.

Several trips were made by the battalion staff to the bridge site. The acting Regimental Commander, Lt. Colonel Strange, Division and Corps engineers were all shown the river, checking the clearing of roadblocks and craters and getting estimates on the bridging time and matériel, checking possible routes for taking assault boats in.

The order came down—assault boats, tonight, as soon as possible—bridgehead required. It would have to be Company K with I, L and M Companies for support. Tanks, TDs, engineers and machine-gun platoons from the 1st Battalion were also available for close support.



Modern transportation in a German village untouched by the war.

Lieutenant Schramm, acting commander of Company K, was called and given orders. There was just enough daylight for him and his platoons to make a hasty reconnaissance. Captain Strickland and Lieutenant Ganaway of Company A, 328th Engineer Battalion, checked routes and started orienting their platoons and checking on the boats.

Boat groups were organized and numbered and assembly points for each group set up. Company M's Machine Gun Platoon would accompany Company K, crossing on the second of the four moves required. Company L was alerted and prepared to cross after Company K if stiff opposition warranted.

At 0015 the assault boats reached the battalion area and it was estimated all would be ready for the crossing at 0100. Company K was ordered forward from its rear assembly area and in a few minutes they were on the road.

The moon was out and the night deathly still. Sounds carried exceptionally well and secrecy was going to be hard to maintain. Everything clicked like clockwork. Only necessary orders were given and these were whispered. This was a new type operation for the 409th and everyone knew that it could be rough, very rough. Men's thoughts were written on their faces, some worried, some anxious, but all determined. Here and there a man would lick his lips—lips dry with anticipation and the desire to get it over.

Everything was quiet, almost too quiet, but still maybe surprise could be achieved. It was decided to call off the heavy preparation and supporting fire planned with cannon, artillery, tank, TD and heavy weapons. These orders went out: "No firing unless ordered," and "Proceed as soon as possible, King Company!"



Plaything for German children: a knocked-out German tank.

Within fifteen minutes the first wave of boats was launched and with them went the prayers of the entire battalion—a battalion alerted and ready for what was necessary. In the quiet night air the noise of paddles in the fast-flowing Danube could be heard for one and one half miles, but still no sound of weapons.

The second wave moved out as soon as the first had beached. A few shots, then silence, and the other waves moved out.

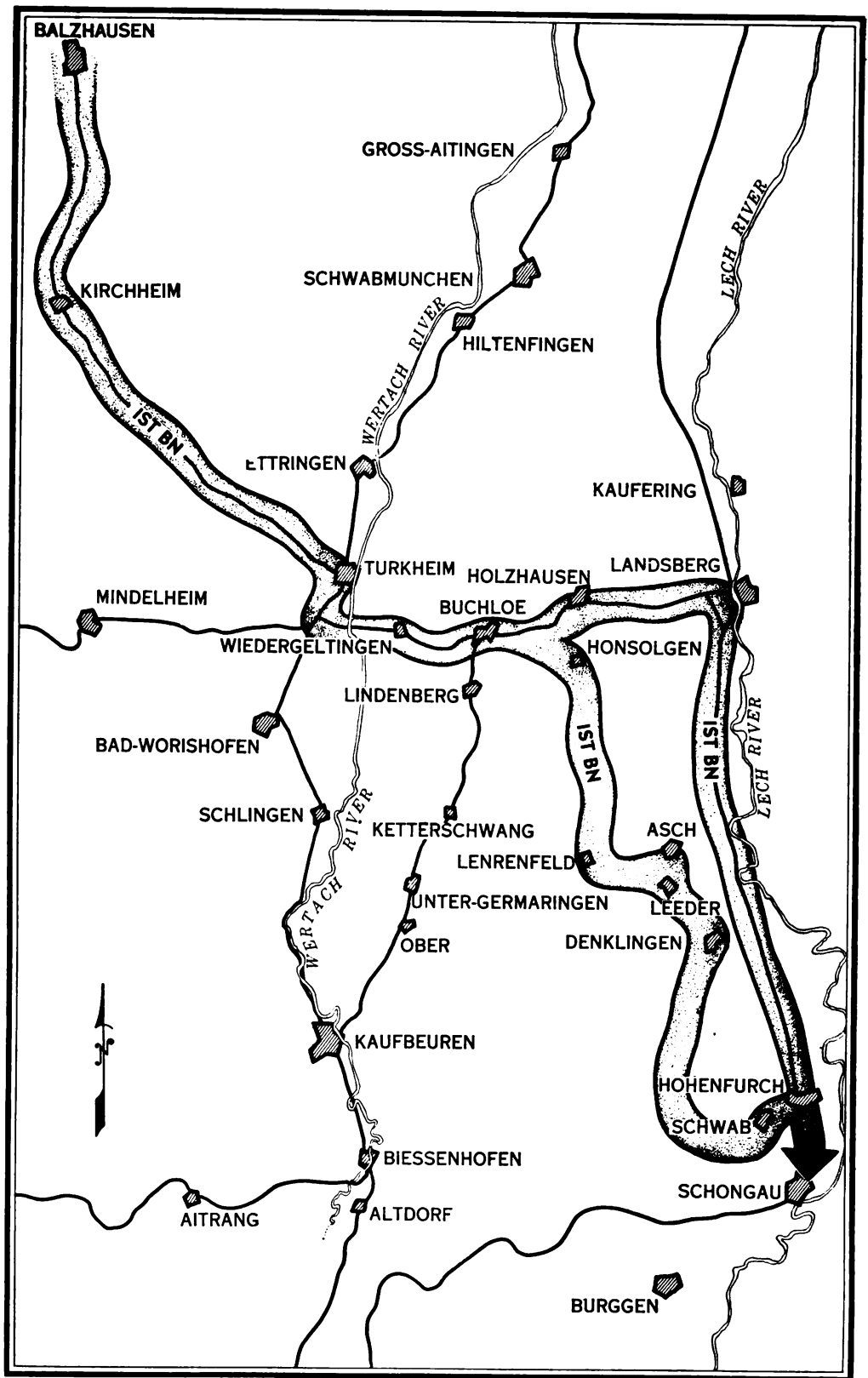
Company K quickly reorganized and moved out. Concussion grenades and sniper fire were both encountered. From where they came no one knew. In the woods targets were difficult to pick out. So again marching fire was employed and again it turned the trick and the objective was gained.

Company K suffered no casualties but two of the engineers were wounded and it was no wonder. While the doughboys crouched in the boats, the engineers stood up and guided the craft.

The next morning Company K was ordered to reconnoiter the town of Leibi, another mile beyond the river, and Company L was ordered to cross the Danube. A six-man patrol returned with 30 prisoners from Leibi and said the town was ready to surrender.

The battalion OP group crossed and set up a CP, wire communications were established across the Danube, the bridgehead was enlarged and another 80 prisoners were taken. Everything was under control and ready to continue.

Troops remained in the vicinity to protect the bridge being constructed at that point. The 3d, however, moved out and reached Rieden-ad-Kotz at the close of the day, meeting only slight resistance. Meanwhile, back at the bridgehead, the engineers had gone into action and were rapidly





Regimental operations staff at Steinau. *Left to right, rear:* Tech. Sgt. J. B. Adams, Operations Sergeant; Major J. J. Urban, S-3; Capt. A. J. Potter, S-2; Cpl. E. Harrington, Draftsman. *Front:* Sgt. H. H. Davis, Jr., Clerk; Sgt. A. D. Queen, Clerk; Pfc. S. J. Armeni.

constructing the bridges which were necessary to keep supply lines intact for troops who were moving rapidly forward.

The 1st and 2d Battalions and all attached troops crossed the Danube River during the morning and afternoon. The 1st Battalion prepared to pass through the 3d Battalion and take the lead in the zone which was leading toward the Austrian border. Ahead, the men knew there were the high Alps and the fighting there could be mighty uncomfortable if Jerry decided to try to defend his positions in the little mountain towns. The 2d Battalion, meanwhile, remained in reserve, awaiting orders to move up if resistance became too stiff for the leading battalions.

The 409th Infantry was now moving swiftly. Its supply lines were well protected and the troops felt confident as the attack neared the end of its first week. The Seventh Army's drive to the southern stronghold of Germany was meeting with remarkable success. Combined with the strong operations in northern Germany, the Reich was on its last legs.



Crossing the Lech at Schongau on an engineer ponton treadway bridge.

On April 27 the Regiment continued the attack which it had started after crossing the Danube from well prepared positions reached the previous day with the 1st Battalion leading and the 3d and 2d Battalions following.

Due to the rapid movement of the entire Seventh Army the supply lines were stretched and all available transportation was required to move



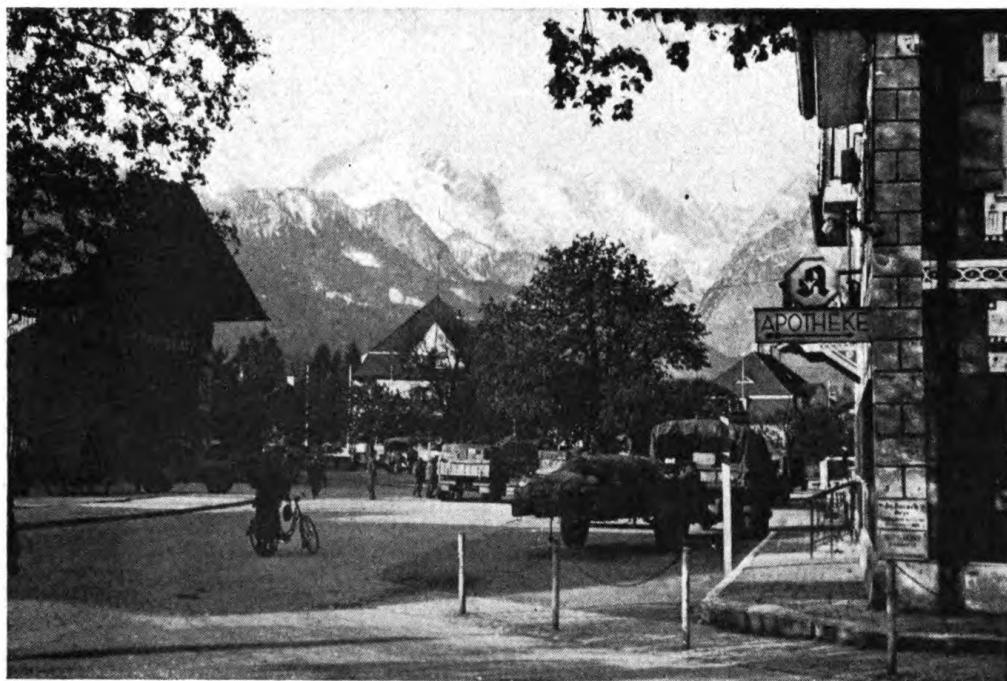
A familiar scene in Germany: remains of a German roadblock.

supplies. None was available to assist the infantrymen in their rapid advance. The 409th Infantry had to devise its own means of rapid transportation. Combat Team 409 was in effect. This meant that the 382d Field Artillery Battalion; Company A of the 328th Medical Battalion; and Company A of the 328th Engineer Battalion, were attached to the 409th Infantry Regiment. In addition to the Combat Team members there were attached 103d Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron; Company A, 781st Tank Battalion; Company A, 824th TD Battalion (self-propelled); Company B, 614th TD Battalion (towed); and Company B, 83d Chemical Mortar Battalion. The transportation of all of these elements, plus the 928th Field Artillery Battalion, was used to motorize the entire Combat Team. All vehicles were overloaded and literally crawling with soldiers, but the 409th Infantry and its attached troops were moving fast—helping to end the war in Europe rapidly.

Burg was cleared at 0630, April 7 and the column continued rapidly south. An enemy column of horse-drawn vehicles was annihilated between Burg and Balzhausen by 0830 and the Regiment advanced to the southeast. Another column of horse-drawn vehicles was caught near Zaisertshofen. Numerous prisoners were captured and many horse-drawn vehicles were destroyed as the Regiment advanced over 70 kilometers toward Schongau. The 409th reached Schongau at the same time as CCA of the 10th Armored Division, which had approached from another direction. The bridges over the Lech River had been blown on the approach of the Americans and Company C, reinforced, crossed on a hastily constructed foot bridge to secure a site for an engineer bridge.



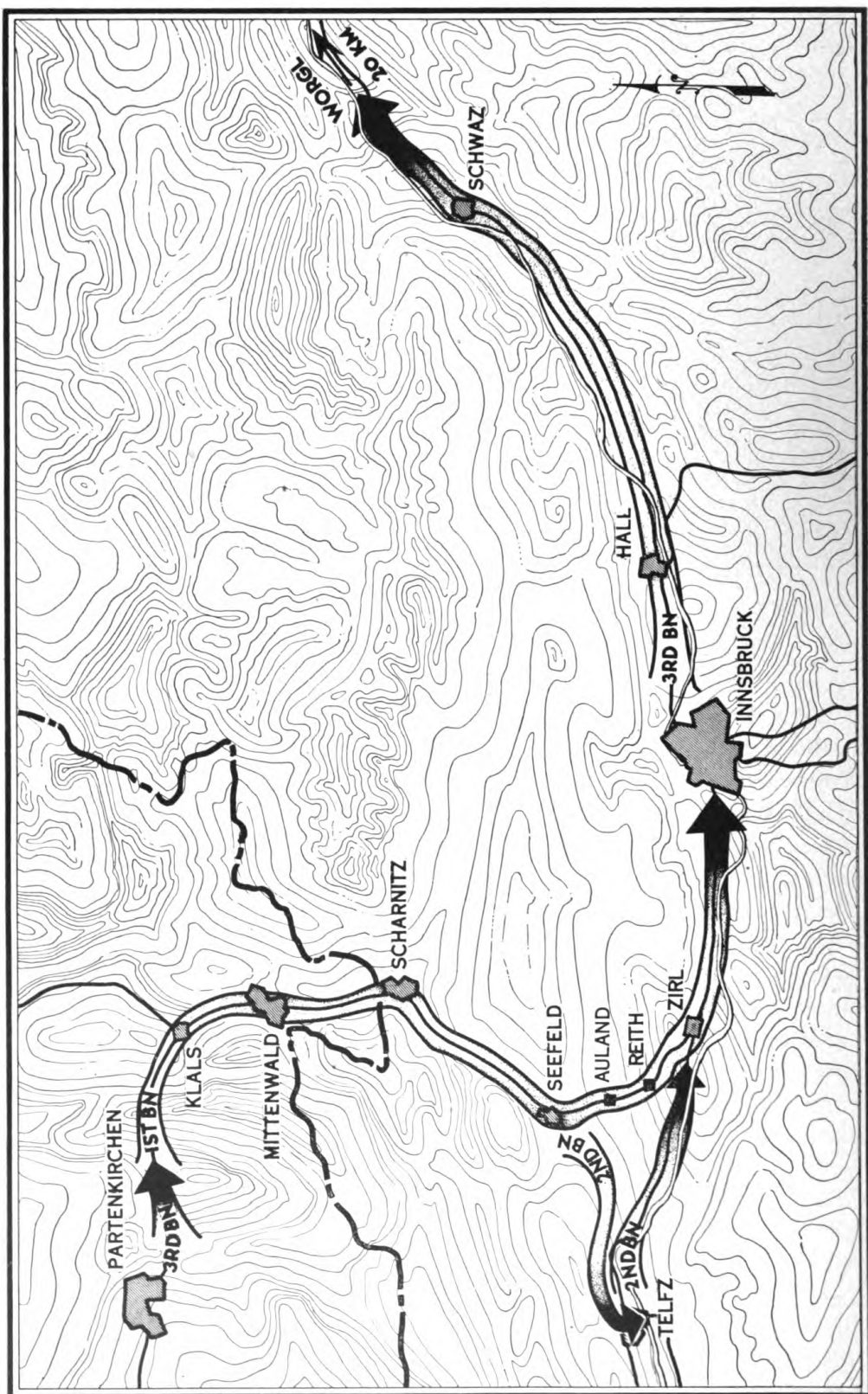
Top: The long, dangerous bridge over the railroad trestle at Schongau. *Bottom:* The blown bridge at Schongau.



Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

On the 28th the Regiment assembled in Schongau and made preparations to cross the river upon completion of a Bailey or ponton bridge. The 2d Battalion moved across the river and relieved Company C as bridgehead security. This enabled the widening of the bridgehead to provide better security in the event of a German counterattack.

The next day the regiment crossed the Lech on the heels of the 10th Armored Division's Combat Command A and advanced to the southeast. The 3d Battalion, motorized, followed behind Task Force Hankins of CCA, supporting the armored task force in the destruction of any enemy forces which might be lodged in the Alps mountains and which the road-bound armored forces could not reach. This was an insurance for rapid advance of the VI Corps in the direction of the Austrian border. As the advance continued the Regiment was further to protect the exposed east flank of the Division by blocking all mountain passes until relieved by elements of the 115th Cavalry Group. This was in conformity with Operations Instruction No. 90, Headquarters 103d Infantry Division. The 1st and 2d Battalions, behind the remainder of CCA, 10th Armored Division, met little resistance and continued to follow the leading elements. At the end of the day the leading elements of the 10th Armored Division were held up by a cratered mountain road on the other side of the famous city of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. CT 409 piled on into Garmisch and immediately set about reconnaissance of a by-pass. Minefields were found, and while 409th infantrymen cleared out the few Jerries protecting them,





Officers of the 409th Infantry on the road into Austria. Capt. T. Spickard, Service Company commander, facing the camera.

engineers of Company A, 328th Engineer Battalion, proceeded to remove the dangerous mines. This mission was accomplished during the black Alpine night, and by morning the by-pass was ready for use. The 10th Armored Division again set out in the lead but when it became necessary for the 3d Battalion to clear enemy resistance from the small town of Kaltenbronn the order came down for the 409th to pass through CCA of the 10th Armored Division and continue the attack to the initial Corps objective which included Innsbruck, Austria, and a large area to the west.

Attached to the Regimental Combat Team for this drive were the following units: Company A, 328th Engineer Battalion; 103d Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop (reinforced with the 1st and 2d Reconnaissance Platoons of the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion); Company A, 781st Tank Battalion; Company A, 824th Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP); Company B, 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Towed); and Company B, 83d Chemical Mortar Battalion.

The opening of May, the month in which victory in Europe came, found troops of the 409th pouring across the Austrian border in an advance from Mittenwald, the last town on the German side of the border, to Scharnitz, the first town on the Austrian side. Austria made the third country in which troops of the Cactus Division had fought. The 1st Battalion was in the lead with the 3d and 2d, respectively, following. Scharnitz was cleared at 1500 hours on May 1 by the 1st Battalion in the face



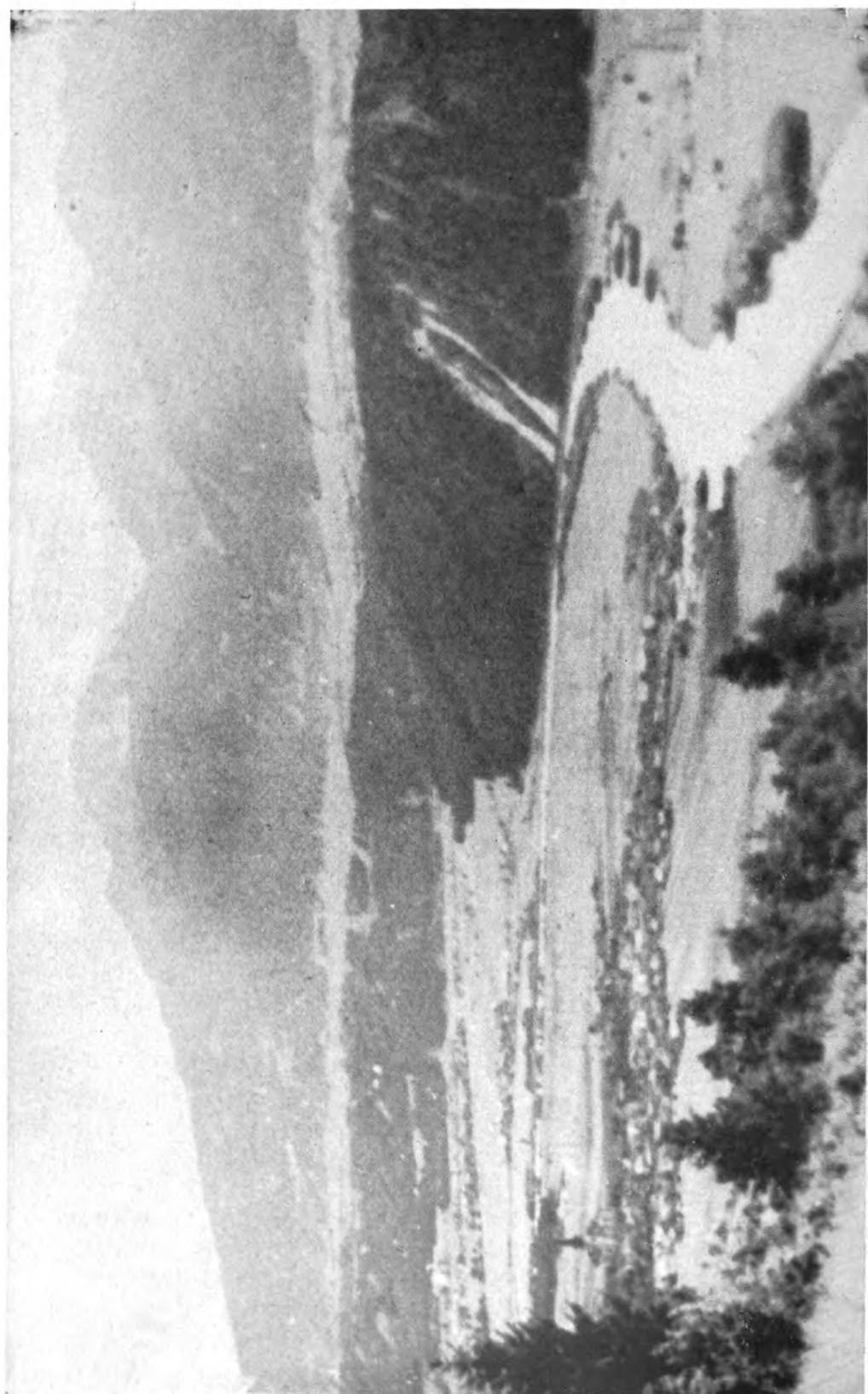
Pickin' em out of the Alps near Scharnitz.



Scharnitz: The 1st Battalion attacking through a German roadblock and tank-delaying hedgehogs.

of determined resistance including much sniper fire. Advance was held up in the vicinity by an antitank ditch, roadblocks and blown bridges, but continued, following clearing of the town, and by the end of the period leading elements of the Regiment were reported to be nearing Seefeld.

The second day of May found the 1st Battalion continuing its advance seizing the two towns of Auland and Reith. The 2d Battalion reconnoitered routes to the southeast to find an access to the Inn River valley in the heart of the Austrian Alps. The 3d Battalion remained in the vicinity of Seefeld and prepared to move, on armor and their own organic vehicles, to the east after Innsbruck was taken. By 1030 the 1st Battalion had fought its way into the Inn River valley and taken the town of Zirl on the banks of the river. Farther to the east several flakwagons were silenced on the high ground to the north. Troops of the 2d Battalion captured the bridge at Telfs intact during a snowstorm. Approximately fifty prisoners were taken in a short fire fight. The battalion suffered no casualties. The 2d Battalion then turned east in the Inn River valley and joined the regimental column at Zirl. Later in the afternoon, Innsbruck, the largest city in the area and capital of the Austrian Tyrol, capitulated. The 1st Battalion troops, mounted on tanks, moved into the city at 1903. The 2d Battalion followed. The 3d Battalion, now fully motorized, passed through the 1st and 2d in Innsbruck, and moved, at dusk, to the east to contact troops of the XXI Corps at the Corps boundary. The 3d Battalion reached the town of Maurach on the Corps boundary by the next



Looking into the Inn River Valley from above Zirl.



Auland: The 1st Battalion and tanks of Company A, 781st Tank Battalion, clear out resistance.

morning. They captured all bridges intact due to the surprise gained by a night movement. Only scattered resistance was met and the battalion lost one tank due to enemy action during the move. A large number of prisoners were taken and left under guard at strategic points along the route of movement. A patrol of infantry and tanks was sent farther east into the XXI Corps zone and, at 2200 hours on May 4, contacted elements of the XXI Corps at Wörgl. The 1st and 2d Battalions remained assembled at Innsbruck where the regimental headquarters was located.

Meanwhile, word had gotten around to the men that Army Group G of the Germans had surrendered to the U. S. Seventh Army and as the doughboys reached their goal, this report was confirmed. Everywhere the news was of German disaster, of false surrender reports and of big-shot Nazis being taken captive. The men of the 409th realized that the end could not be far off.

On May 5 the 3d Battalion moved from Maurach to Schwaz, Austria, closing in its new area as the period ended. Reconnaissance elements of the 3d Battalion returned to parent organizations after accomplishing their mission of contacting elements of the XXI Corps. All of the other units of the Combat Team assembled in the vicinity of Innsbruck and remained awaiting further orders.

Regimental CP was moved to the vicinity of Vomp on May 6 and opened there at 1500 hours. Pursuant to Operations Instruction No. 91, Headquarters 103d Infantry Division, the 1st and 2d Battalions moved to new areas that same day, the 1st moving to Hall and the 2d to Wattens. The 3d Battalion remained in Schwaz. The following day the 83d Chemical Mortar Battalion, attached to the 409th, moved to the vicinity of Vomp. The Regiment made plans for the police and garrison of the area assigned to it. Roadblocks were established, passes checked and guards assigned to vital installations. On May 9 troops of the 1st Battalion and



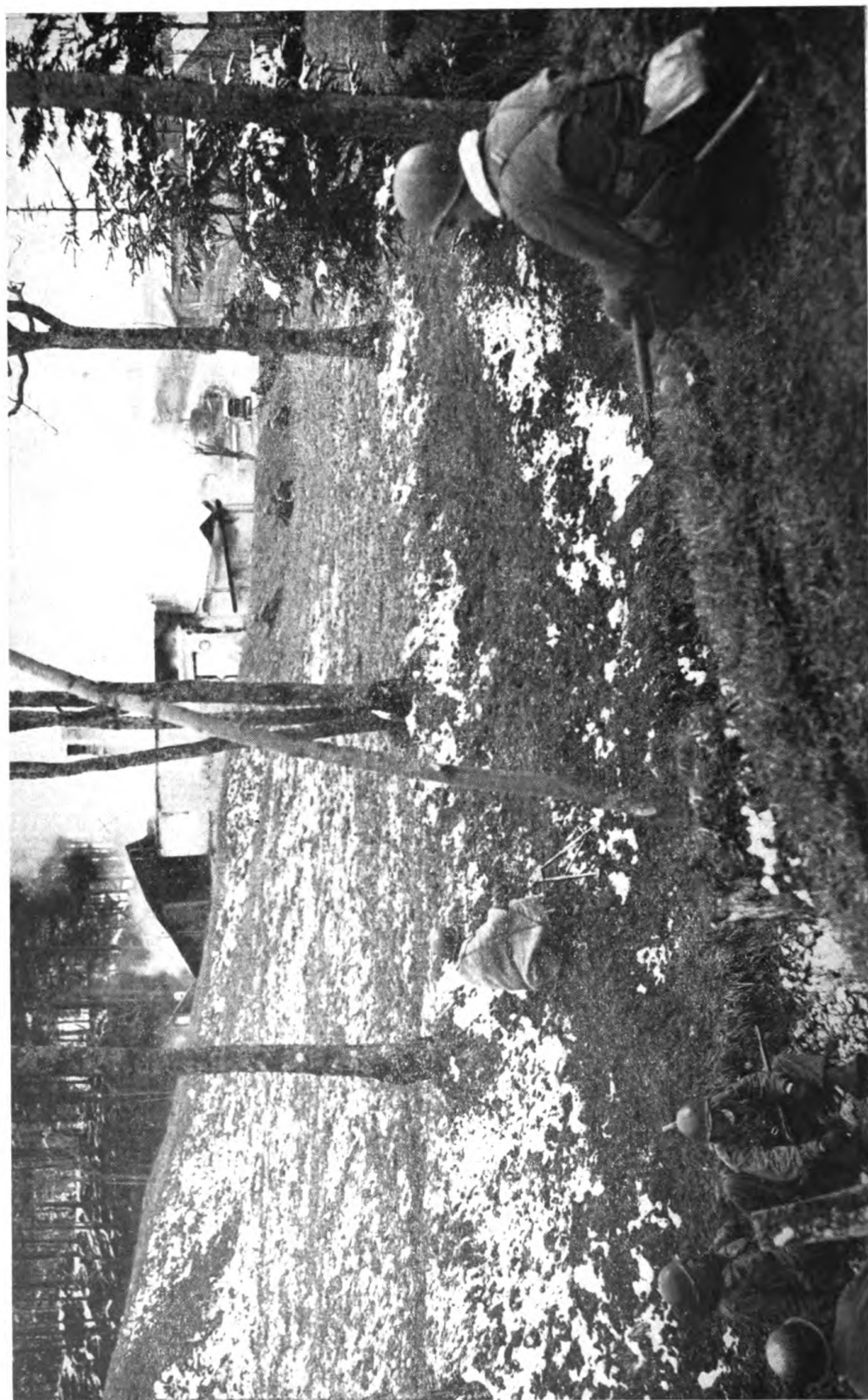
The 1st Battalion enters Innsbruck on tanks. In the picture can also be seen German prisoners not yet collected.



The Regimental staff. *Left to right, rear:* Lt. Col. H. E. Strange, Executive Officer; Major C. E. Porteous, S-4; Major J. J. Urban, S-3; Capt. W. E. Van Woaert, Personnel Officer. *Front:* Capt. F. Gerken, Ammunition Officer; and Capt. W. C. Moore, S-1.

Cannon Company participated in the Division VE-day review in Innsbruck. As the first ten days of May ended, the Regiment was checking equipment and beginning training schedules in an effort to keep equipment in outstanding condition and the combat efficiency of the men high.

The period from May 11 to May 31 was principally one of training, garrison and police duty for the 409th Infantry. In addition, the period was used to check equipment and put it in first class condition. On May 11, Lt. Col. Hubert E. Strange, of Loogootee, Indiana, then commanding the Regiment, held a meeting of his staff officers at the regimental CP in Vomp and told them exactly what training would be held for their respective units during their stay in the various little Austrian towns. This training would include squad and platoon problems to keep combat efficiency high and to correct mistakes which had been made in combat. In addition, drill, care of the feet, cleaning and care of the weapons, intelligence, artillery fire, scouting and patrolling were a few of the numerous subjects which occupied the men's training hours.



Awaiting the jump-off signal for Auland.

While not training, the men engaged in guard and roadblock duty, including the checking of passes, the carrying out of Allied Military Government orders and the protection of vital installations. In accordance with a War Department directive, all men were given an opportunity to see the motion picture, "Two Down and One To Go," showing how the discharge point system operated. Adjusted Service Rating cards were made out for the officers and enlisted men and the current question in the Regiment was, "How many points you got?" Many of the men in the Regiment had the 85 points necessary for qualification for discharge and these men sweated out what would be next in their future.

On May 15, Colonel Lloyd returned to the Regiment from the hospital and resumed command. On May 17 a review was held on the parade ground at Schwaz and Colonel Lloyd was given his first opportunity to see the men of the Regiment since his return from the hospital.

Only one major change was made in the Regimental area during the period. This occurred May 13 when, in accordance with Operations Instruction No. 91, Headquarters 103d Infantry Division, dated May 12, 1945, the area assigned to the 3d Battalion, 409th Infantry, was extended. For the purpose of conveying the new instructions, Field Order No. 18, dated May 12, 1945, was issued by the Regiment. The 3d Battalion CP was moved to Hotel Seehof, Austria, located on the edge of the beautiful lake, Achensee, northeast of Innsbruck. The CP had formerly been located at Schwaz. Regimental CP remained in Vomp, 1st Battalion in Hall and 2d Battalion in Wattens. Company L moved into its new location in Jenbach at 1730 hours while Company M moved in its new location at Achenkirch at 1805 hours.

An honor came to the 409th Infantry Regiment on May 29 when at a Division review in Innsbruck, Combat Infantry Regiment streamers were affixed to regimental, battalion and company flags. The streamers acknowledge the fact that at least 65 per cent of the strength of such units have been awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge. Two other distinctions came to the Regiment during the period. The first Distinguished Service Cross earned in the Regiment was awarded posthumously to Pfc. Wilson F. Rodgers, of Tacoma, Washington, of K Company, 409th Infantry, for action near Taintrux, France, on November 14-16, 1944. The other honor was the award of the Legion of Merit—the first such in the Regiment—to Major Julius J. Urban, of Jackson Heights, New York, for exceptionally meritorious service from November 9, 1944 to March 25, 1945, as regimental Plans and Operations Officer.

The last twenty-one days of May were not all work days for the men of the 409th Infantry Regiment. Entertainment was one of the foremost



Major Julius J. Urban (*left*), S-3, 409th Infantry and Capt. William C. Moore (*right*), Regimental S-1.

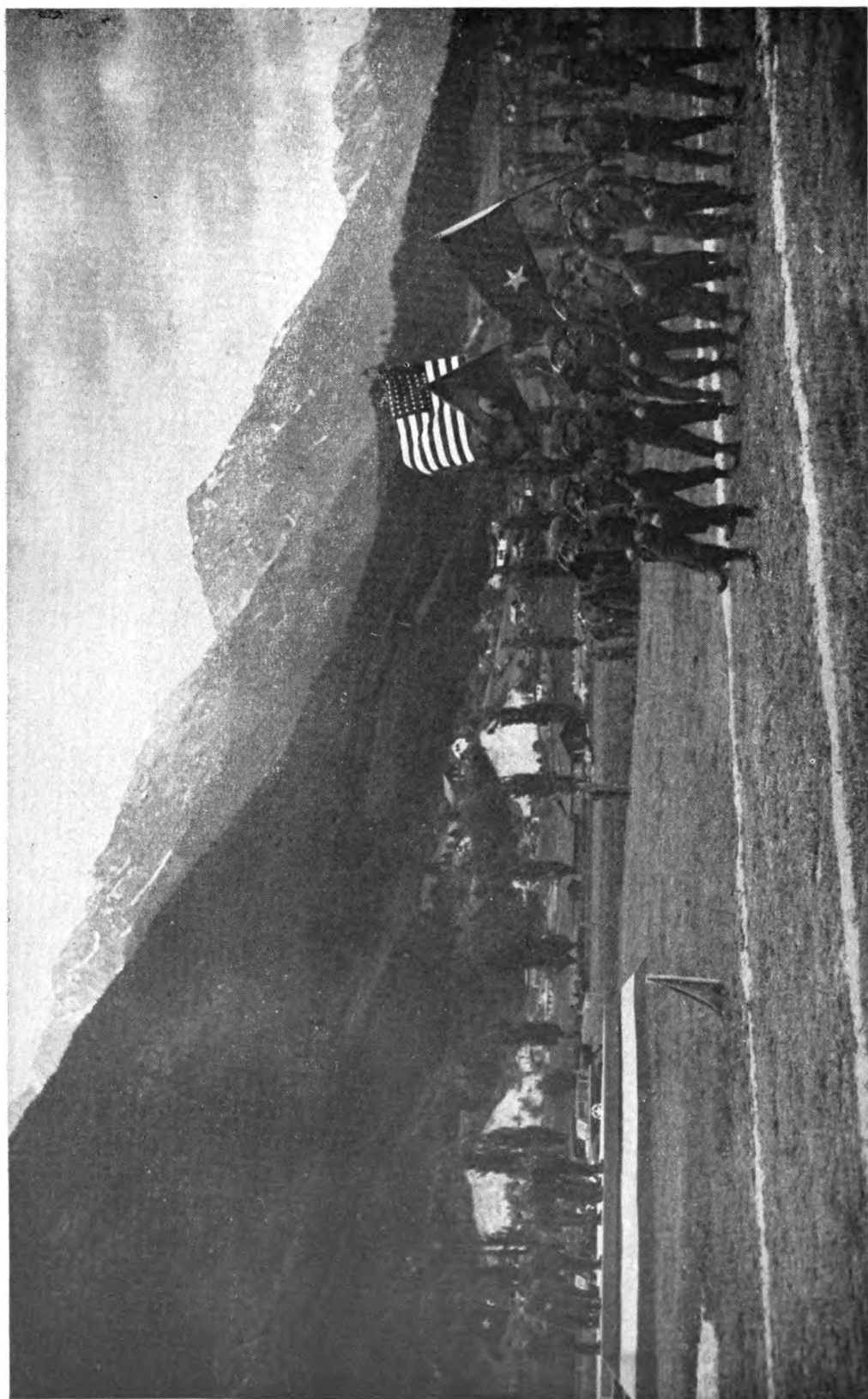
concerns of the Cactusmen, K Company and Headquarters Company being among the first units to open taprooms. K's was called the Kommando Club and Headquarters was called Dad's Alpine Rest Club. Frequent movies and shows were held throughout the regimental area. A rest center was set up at Achensee with Lt. Allen R. Arrison, of Los Angeles, California, in charge. Each company was allotted a stay at the rest center where movies, boating and various forms of recreation were enjoyed.

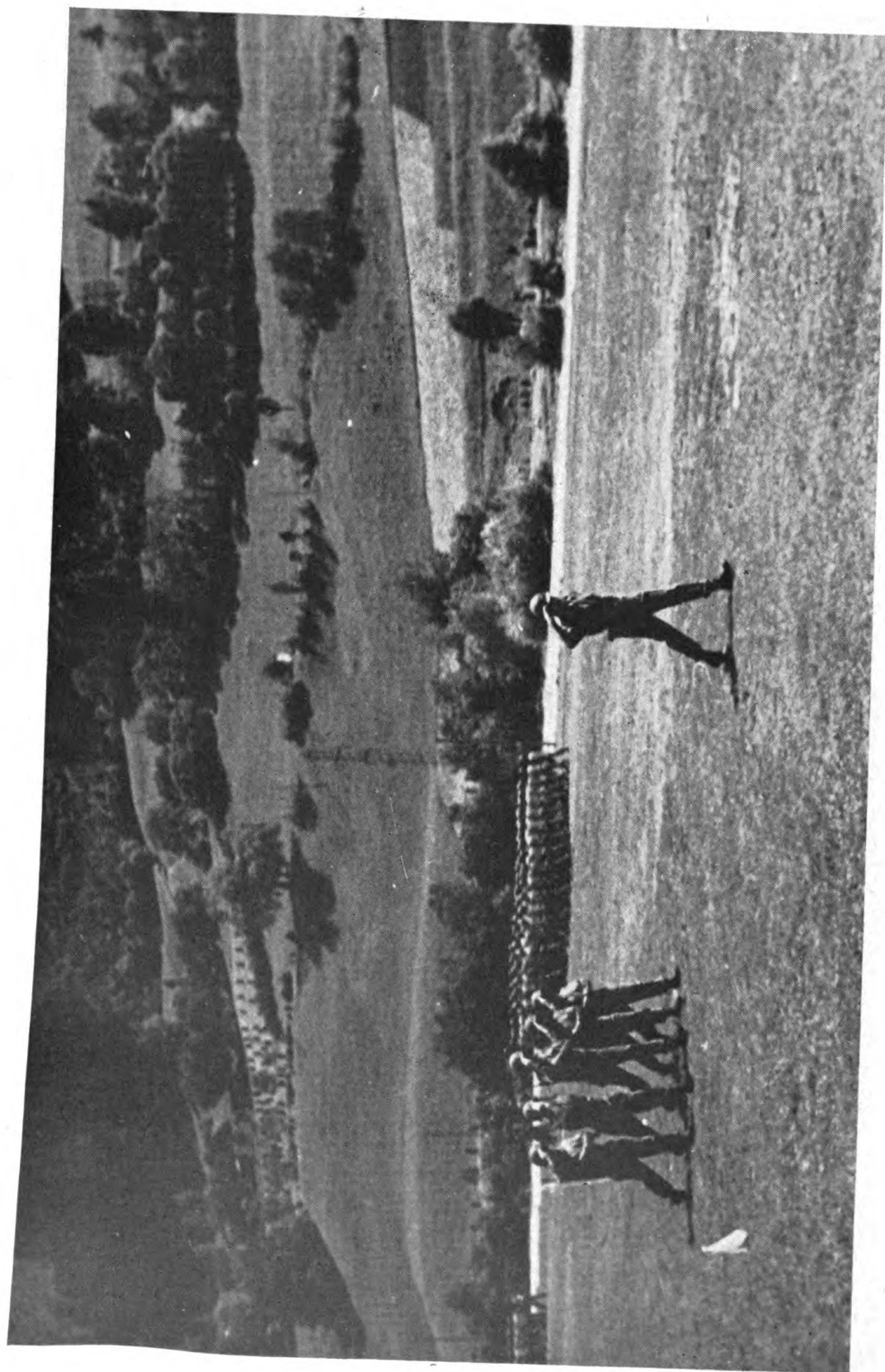
In addition, daily quotas were given for trips to Innsbruck for the 103d Infantry Division Enlisted Men's Club where skiing and other recreation were enjoyed. Current regimental quotas to Nancy, the Riviera, Great Britain and Paris rest centers were filled.

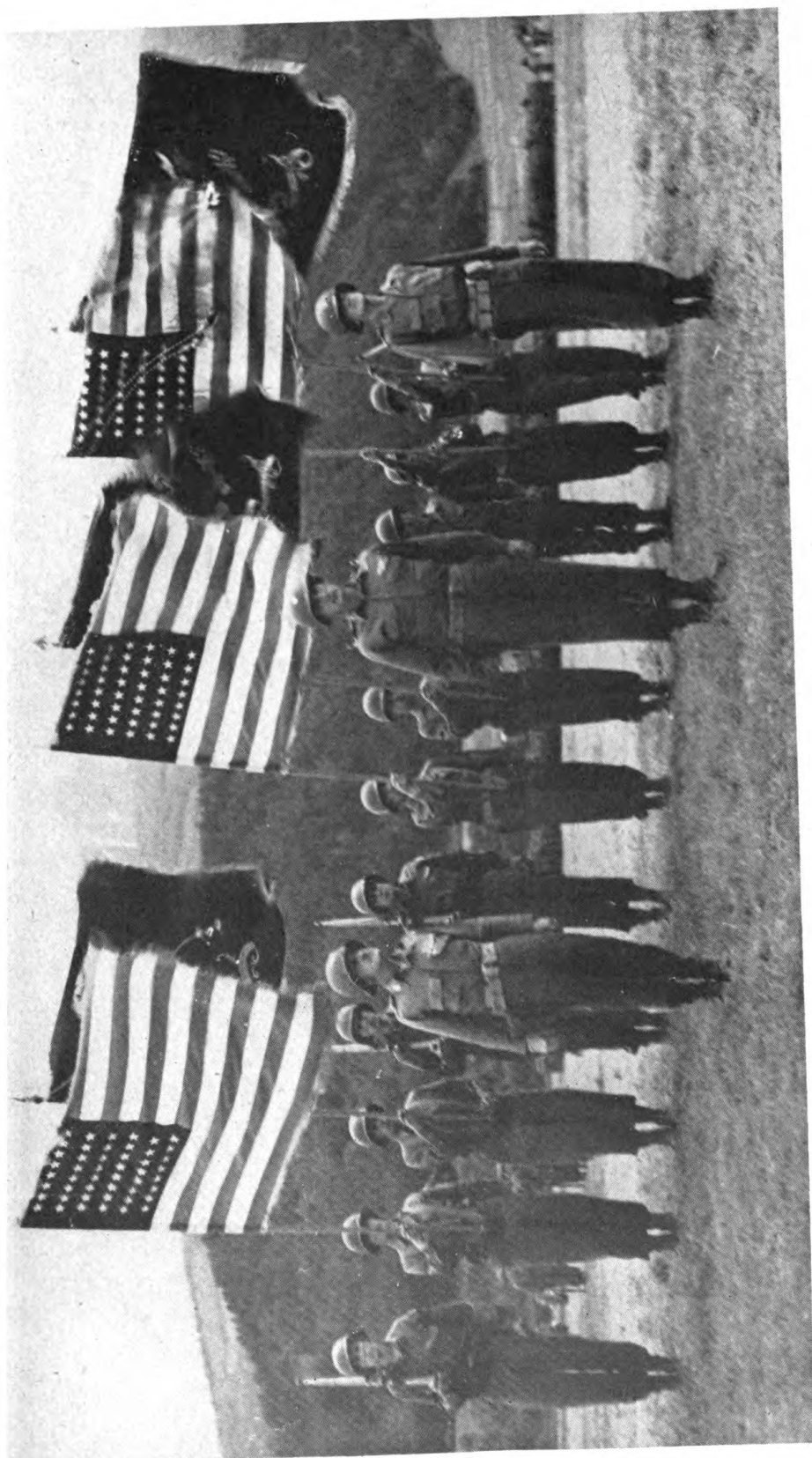
Memorial Day, May 30, was designated a holiday by order of the 103d Infantry Division and higher headquarters and training schedules were cancelled for the troops. A memorial service was conducted at which time Lt. Colonel Strange read a list of men of the Regiment killed in action.

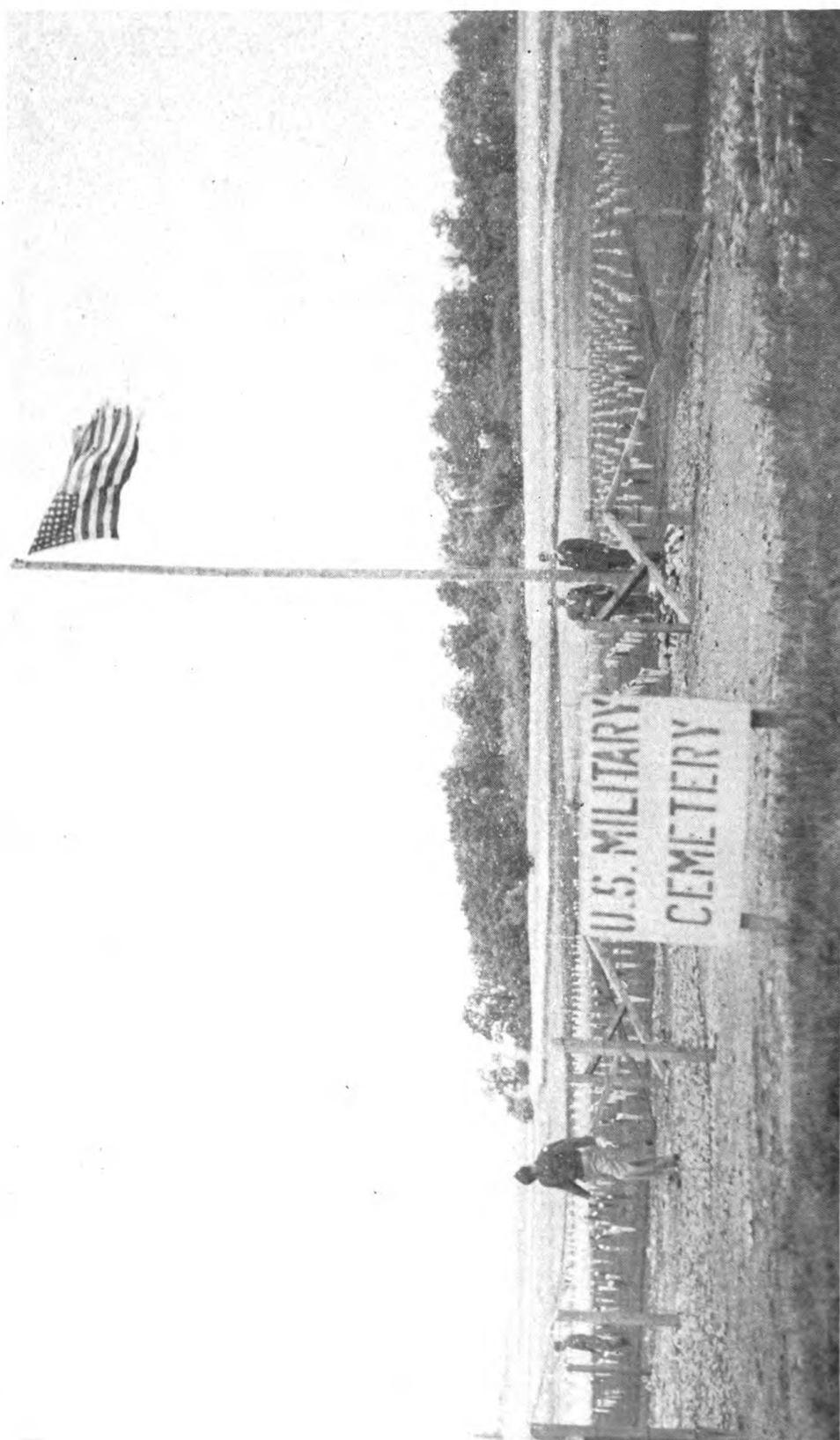


This page and the five that follow show scenes at the 103d Infantry Division review at Innsbruck airfield, at which Combat Infantry Regiment streamers were affixed to regimental, battalion, and company colors and guidons. In this picture, note "Steadfast," motto of the 409th Infantry, on the colors to which the streamer is being fastened. That is Maj. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, Division Commander, watching. Colonel Lloyd, 409th Infantry CO, is at the extreme right of the front row in the picture on page 163.









The American military cemetery at Hochfelden, France, where most of the 409th Infantry's fallen are buried.

THE FINAL DAYS OF THE 409TH INFANTRY

The 409th Infantry left Innsbruck and moved to Landsberg in Germany when French troops came to relieve the U. S. troops in the sector of Austria in which the 409th Infantry had been performing occupational duties.

We had lost many of our men to other Divisions while in Innsbruck, chief among which were the 5th Infantry Division and the 45th Infantry Division. This was as a result of the redeployment of high-point men to the States—the 103d Division was to take home the high-pointers. In Landsberg this exchange of personnel continued. The 45th and a few other divisions gained more of the men of the 409th Infantry and the 409th in turn received the high-pointers from these other outfits.

Ready for redeployment to the States, the 409th Infantry left Landsberg on August 24, 1945, for the French port of Le Havre. After further processing at Le Havre the 409th sailed for the U.S.A. on September 9, and soon saw the welcome sight of the Statue of Liberty at the port of New York.

The 409th Infantry was inactivated on September 19, 1945, at Camp Shanks, New York Port of Embarkation, the same port from which it had embarked, slightly less than a year previously, to help in the defeat of the Axis war machine.

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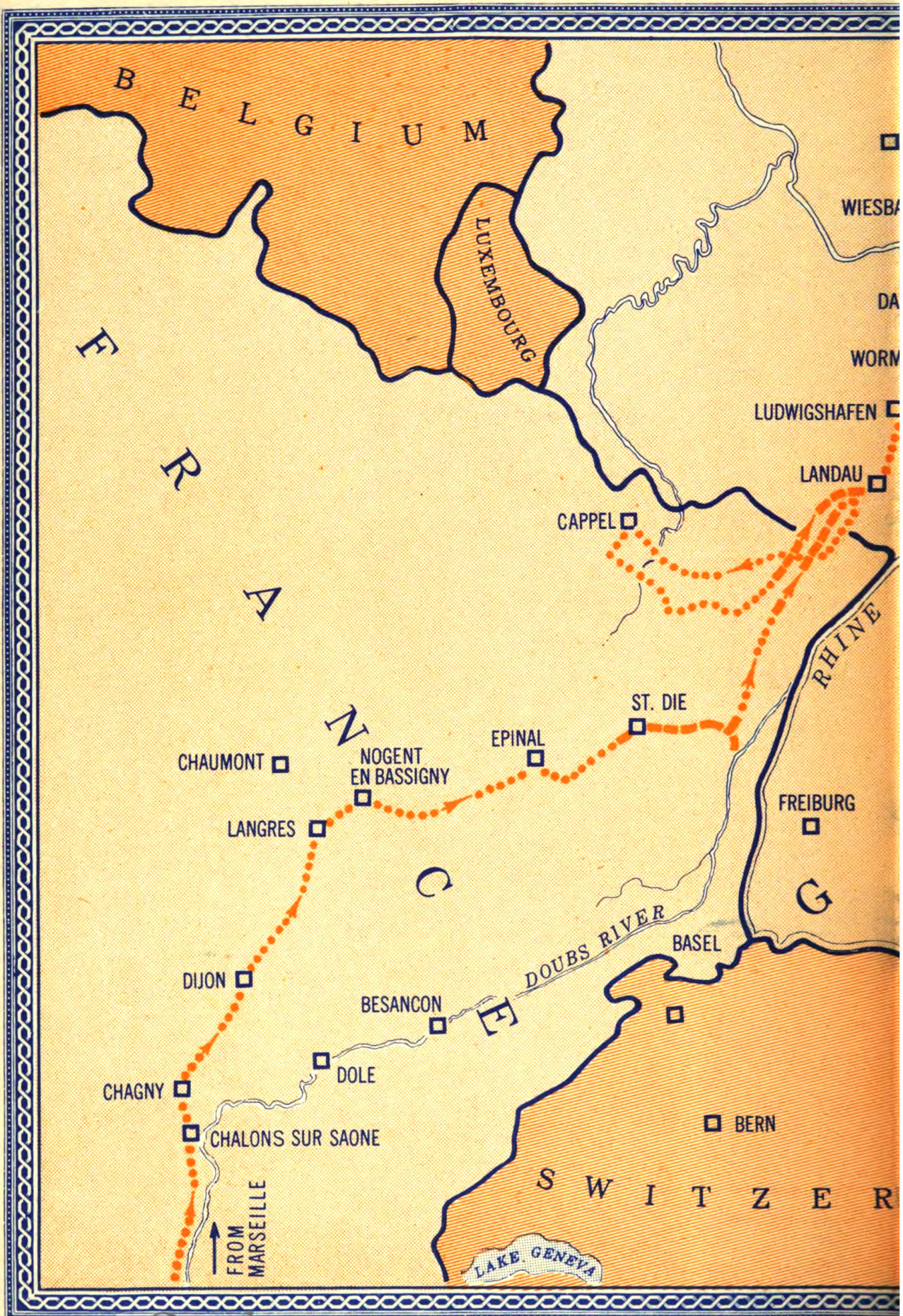
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**ROUTE OF THE 409TH
INF. REGT.**

-  FIGHTING ROUTES
 NON-FIGHTING ROUTES
AND DEFENSE POSITIONS

